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"A decidedly unsavory publication"



RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD



DAWN OF THE DEAD was titled ZOMBIE in Europe and Lucio Fulci's ZOMBIE was consequently known as ZOMBIE II over there. Now we've come across this from a film calling itself ZOMBIE III (see small print). Apparently this is one of the many zombie films which have yet to get a U.S. distributor.

(Front cover) A screaming corpse from RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD is flanked by (top left) a victim of Fulci's NEW YORK RIPPER, and (bottom left) a girl who's encountered THE CURSE OF THE ALPHA STONE.

Ed Gein checks out

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following article is reprinted from the July 26, 1984 edition of the *Madison, Wisconsin CAPITAL TIMES*.

Ed Gein, a farmer hospitalized nearly 27 years ago for the grisly slayings on which the movie *PSYCHO* reportedly was based, died today at Mendota Mental Institute.

The cause of death was respiratory failure. He died at 7:45 a.m.

Gein, 77, was found innocent by reason of mental disease in his only trial and spent almost all his life since his 1957 arrest in state mental institutions. He had been at Mendota since May 1978, hospital officials said.

The events that led to Gein's arrest began on Nov. 16, 1957 when relatives of Bernice Worden, 58, a widow who ran a hardware store in the tiny Waushara County town of Plainfield, realized she was missing.

Gein's battered pickup truck had been seen near the store twice that day, and a Wood County deputy drove to Gein's farm to ask if he had noticed anything. No one was home.

He returned later and still got no answer. He looked into a lean-to at the side of the house and saw Worden's body hanging by the heels, decapitated and "dressed out like a deer," according to statements made at the time.

Authorities arrested Gein in town. Searching his farmhouse, they found preserved human heads and lampshades and chair seats made out of human skin.

But one room was boarded off — the room that had belonged to Gein's mother, who died in 1945. That room was just as she left it.

Police accused Gein of robbing the recently dug graves of women, who like his mother, died in middle age. They found a death mask of a woman who had a rural tavern and had disappeared three years before.

Both she and Worden were believed to resemble Gein's mother in his view, authorities said.

Robert Bloch, the author of the novel on which Alfred Hitchcock's 1960 thriller "Psycho" was based, lived 50 miles from Gein's

farmhouse and based his book on the episode, according to the *Milwaukee Journal*. Hitchcock's main character is obsessed by his dead mother and keeps her body in a room in their home.

Gein, after his arrest, was declared unfit to stand trial and was sent to Central State Hospital at Waupun.

In 1968, he was tried in the death of Worden. It was ruled that he was insane at the time of the crime and he was returned to the hospital with a verdict of innocent by reason of mental disease or defect.

In 1974, Gein sought a sanity hearing and asked for his freedom. But Circuit Judge Robert Gollmar sent Gein back to Central State. In 1978, he was transferred to the Mendota facility.

Authorities testified at the time that Gein was never a problem in prison, although he reacted rather poorly to other inmates. He worked as a carpenter, mason and hospital attendant while at Central State.

He supposedly was saving his money for a dreamed-of trip around the world.

IN THE GREAT TRADITION OF I EAT YOUR SKIN AND I DRINK YOUR BLOOD, NOW...

**I LICK YOUR
VOMIT**



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OF DISGUSTING
BODY FLUIDS

RAY WATERS

THE SPLATTER TIMES
EDITOR/PUBLISHER
DONALD FARMER

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A behind-the-scenes look at the making of RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD

By KRIS GILPIN

AUGUST 15th, 1984: It was a rainy day (a semi-rarity in L.A.) when I pulled up to the warehouse in Burbank in which most of RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD was being filmed. Judith Everitt, a publicist for the Michael Dalling Company, greeted me inside the building (everyone in the warehouse, "Return Productions, Inc." was very nice), then showed me a couple of sets on the way to the embalming room set where writer/director Dan O'Bannon was rehearsing his living and undead actors (after shooting some scenes involving some reanimated dead in a graveyard set in Sylmar, about 30 miles north of L.A., most of the film was shot in this warm warehouse).

Judith, whose first film work was publicity for SUDEN IMPACT, first walked me through the Medical Supply Room set. In the film a cadaver comes to life in a meat locker, then runs amuck through the room, in which all the equipment is bona fide medical supplies. Five skeletons in plastic bags, which will also be resurrected, hung in the room. We walked up some stairs which look us to the make-up room, in which several late dead masks were on display; the stars' dressing rooms (Cla Gulager stars as Burt, head of the medical supply warehouse); and the catered food area where I would later interview Dan O'Bannon.

I was then ushered to the embalming room, where I sat just outside the door, out of range of the camera, which sat on its dolly inside. They were still rehearsing, as a smiling punker-zombie walked out of the room; he sported a curly blonde mohawk, a ring in his nose and a dirty black trenchcoat on which were a couple dozen eyeball, Snoopy, TWILIGHT ZONE and ERASERHEAD buttons and pins.

Drew Deighan, who plays a paramedic that gets consumed in the film, cued me in on the scene. "Freddie and Frank have inhaled this chemical which makes the dead come alive (hence the Sylmar cemetery sequence)," he whispered. "The chemical reanimates the bodies, which then live off of 'live' brains only and, if the dead don't get that, it's like a heroin withdrawal to them. There's also a half-corpsed that speaks," he said with a grin.

A buzzer on the soundman's set-up sounded as an assistant called for quiet on the set. When the camera rolled, Gulager, with a lead pipe in his hand, explained to the group of men in the room how, "These two sons-of-bitches let (the chemical) out!" One infected character then let out a string of horrendous screams and wails, as someone noted, "Rigor mortis is setting in." Some shuffling, and then the screaming stopped — they got the shot in one long take. The supporting players then shook hands with, hugged and said goodbye to the other actors, as this was the final week of a six-week shooting schedule.

The crew went to the adjacent crematorium set to rehearse the next scene, which involved Cla and fellow veteran character actor Don Calfa etminating some half-eaten evidence. "The bones are no problem," he assured Gulager as O'Bannon looked on. "The hardest part to burn is the heart — it's just one big, tough muscle." The two men then threw several suspicious-looking trash bags onto a large tray on a hearth; when Don pushed the tray back into the raging fire (which would be simulated later during shooting), it almost slid out of the other end of the set. Amidst chuckles, someone commented, "That's what rehearsals are for."

After the rehearsal everyone dispersed; Cla and Dan (who chewed gum when on the set) discussed DARK STAR, O'Bannon's first movie ("It's almost my son's favorite film," Gulager told him), while the crews set up the lights and struck one wall of the set to accommodate the Panavision camera.

I had worn a red DARK STAR T-shirt for this occasion, and it had garnered several compliments from people on the set, including the writer/director himself. "Where did you get that?" Dan asked me, smiling. I told him it was bought at a local convention some time ago from two middle-aged housewife/fans who make shirts up in their homes. I then turned around, showing him a little depiction of Benson, Arizona (the title of the 1974 film's main theme), on the back of the T-shirt. "Benson looks nothing like that," he said. "It looks like the moon."

Everyone busied themselves as I spoke with a couple of people on the set; a girl was polishing a black and white prop pistol as the Director of Photography picked the right gels for a standing light (he finally decided on two: one in a fleshstone and another in yellow), etc. I asked Sara Wade, the film's pretty set dresser, about the script. "It was written tongue-in-cheek anyway," she told me, "but there are some things that we've happened during filming which have been very funny."

I then cornered Ray Krakowski, the Burbank paramedic assigned to the set that day, to talk about the fire gags in the film (California law states that a safety officer must be present only when a film is shot on location; if it is shot in a studio this isn't necessary). "The only flame used in the film will be from propane fuel (in the crematorium stove), with hot coals to look like ashes; the other burning effects will be achieved through the lighting. This building has no built-in fire protection equipment," he explained, "so all seven tonight, when they'll be using actual fire, there will be one fire engine here with a full crew of three men."

It was then one o'clock, when everyone broke for a half-hour lunch. On my way upstairs I passed a dummy sitting propped up against a wall; across its chest was a strip of tape with the question DO YOU KNOW THIS

MAN? written on it. Above the dummy hung an expensive-looking jacket with the words FUCK YOU embroidered on the back in cursive script (this might've been a prop jacket).

Upstairs, Judith invited me to help myself to lunch, when I was able to ask the director of RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD some questions.

Kris Gilpin: You acted in DARK STAR, and seemed to have a good time in it. Have you ever wanted to act again?

Dan O'Bannon: Not at all. I grew up acting; I quit acting on the stage when I was about 19 or 20; I just found it too emotionally painful to act. Then, when I went to film school and did DARK STAR, this was a novelty: film acting instead of stage. It wasn't quite as exhausting emotionally as stage acting, but it was trying and taxing and difficult, and not really worth all of the exertion considering that I really wanted to put my energies 'behind' the camera, and that as clever as I am as an actor, I won't have any difficulty finding people that are better.

KG: In what way will this picture be different from other zombie pictures?

DOB: It is so different that it is beyond description; words fall me. I'm a pretty articulate, pretty verbal person — I know language pretty well — but I must tell you that there are certain creative processes which are not mediated verbally. I don't know how to describe the difference. Certain separate things I can tell you, such as how the plot differs, but I don't want to tell you those 'cause they'll go out into the public. But in terms of tone, quality and style, I have no words: I can only put it on the screen and say, "There, see that?" Maybe someone more articulate than I, maybe someone qualified as a film critic, can put it into words. All I can tell you is that I was trying to be 'me', rather than any other filmmaker. I was born to direct films; it's been bottled up in me for 37 years.

KG: Will RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD have any intentional humor in it?

DOB: (quickly and happily) Yes!

KG: Will it have the same type of graphic violence as in the first film?

DOB: It will have everything in it, on purpose; in my first picture (as director) I have to prove that I can do all the things a good director can do, so I've stuffed it with lots of things. I didn't want to have to, on my second picture, sit around and argue with some producer who'll say, "Yes, but can you handle actors? Yes, but can you handle camera? Yes, but can you do scares? Can you do humor? Can you do serious scenes? Can you do politics? Can you handle action? Special effects?" I didn't want to bear 'any' of that.

KG: What is the budget on this production?

DOB: Three million, but that isn't really realistic because, before we even went into pre-production, the project was so long in termination that one million had gone already

into rights, legalities and overhead, so the amount we actually have to spend on making the movie was two million.

KG: What kind of special effects are used in the film?

DO'B: Primarily they have to do with trying to make corpse effects be realistic. It's tougher than it sounds, and we've had mixed results; we're going to try and reshoot some of the corpse effects which didn't turn out too well — trying to make a mechanical corpse move around is not easy. Because a human in make-up is bulky, and it would be nice to see animated skeletal things, wouldn't it? But on our budget that's very, very hard, and I was not willing to put all of the money and time into horror effects and the skimp on acting, sets, performance and story. I think a lot of low-budget horror films do that; they have great horror effects, but the rest of the picture is not very good.

KG: Does this film pick up where *NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD* left off, or does it actually have nothing to do with it?

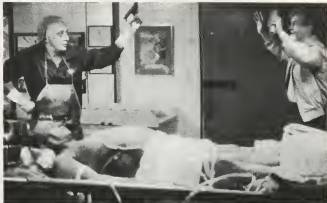
DO'B: Well, that's a secret, but let me tell you that it falls somewhere between the two extremes. It does 'not' pick up where the first one left off; it's not like *HALLOWEEN 2* where 5 minutes later... on the other hand, it's not entirely divorced from the original; it could not be and have this title; to do that would be fraud. On the other hand, to be too close to it could bore me — I'm not George Romero, let George Romero make George Romero's films; he makes them well. I don't want to come on like an imitator of him, because then no one would know I existed. He makes good movies, but I don't want to be confused with any other filmmaker. I just want to learn lessons from the masters and do the thing that I like to do on the screen, whatever that may be.

KG: While I had the chance, Dan, I wanted to ask you something. Philip K. Dick has always been my favorite writers.

DO'B: Oh, indeed; he's a fine writer.

KG: How did you come to write two screenplays based on two of his short stories?

DO'B: Ronnie Shusett had the rights to "We Can Remember It for You Wholesale," and he asked me if I'd look at it, if I thought there was any way it could be a screenplay. I said, "I think so." That was back in the old days when I wasn't making money, before I was a pro, and I was too stupid to know you get contracts before you do work for somebody else, so I batted off about half a script on it and gave it to him. Over the years I subsequently finished it for him and, as both of our careers improved, I became a professional in that time and asked him to formalize a contract and get me some money. It was very tough to lick; as I did like that script — I could only use a bit of it because it's a very, very short story — I had to put down what he'd written and then make up the rest. Following in the footsteps of Phil Dick when using a blank page is tough, and I told (Shusett) I very much wanted to direct it, and he said so, he wouldn't let me. He wanted someone, a director, that he felt has a bigger name or reputation, so I was kind of ticked off about that. And then, by pure chance, a producer by the name of Daniel Gliberson came around with a story he'd bought



A shoot-out in the morgue from Dan O'Banion's *RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD*.

Photo: Michael Dalling Co.

by Phil Dick called "Second Variety." He had a few bucks in his pocket and asked if I'd adapt it, and I said sure. That one wasn't so hard to adapt: it was a bit longer and it was well worked out, so it didn't take me seven years, like it did with *TOTAL RECALL*. (the "Wholesale" script). It only took me about six months because I didn't have to make up that much; I just turned it into a script. So that is now over at Chuck Fries Productions; they can't find a director for it (the day after this talk, I read that Don (PHANTASM, THE BEASTMASTER) Coscarelli is slated to film that second script, which is entitled *SCREAMERS*. K.G.) I think what I'll do next time is: I'll go buy a Phil Dick story!

KG: Good for you! Do you look forward to working with David Cronenberg on *TOTAL RECALL*?

DO'B: I won't be working with him; I just wrote it. I no longer help other directors make good movies; I used to; it does a hell of a lot for them and not much for me. If somebody else is directing one of my scripts, I'm going to stay far away. You know, I was deeply involved on *ALIEN*; I influenced the outcome of the film on the screen quite a bit, but there was also a lot of pain because I had to struggle a lot with people who didn't like it. When it came to do *BLUE THUNDER* I said, "Forget it, let the movie stink"; I didn't want to fight anymore. All I was really interested in was directing, and I'm doing that now.

KG: Is directing everything you wanted it to be?

DO'B: (Happily) Yes!

KG: Are there any other directing jobs lined up for the near future?

DO'B: Well, I've been getting along pretty well with Menahem Golan over at Cannon Films. I did a couple of scripts for him — he just filmed one in London with Tobe Hooper: an adaptation of Colin Wilson's book *SPACE VAMPIRES*, and Menahem seemed pretty pleased with the outcome of it, so we've been talking about doing something else. Don Jacoby and I just scripted a remake of the old classic *INVADERS FROM MARS*, and there's some possibility that I might (direct) that next. I'd

certainly like to work with Menahem, as a director. I like his attitude. He's a good guy, and he doesn't mind telling you what he does and doesn't like, which is rare in this industry.

KG: How did you find writing for television (two episodes of *BLUE THUNDER*)? Were there a lot of restraints?

DO'B: It doesn't have anything to do with creativity. It doesn't have anything to do with entertainment. It has to do with creating filler between commercials and, as such, it's run like a baloney factory: you don't want to see any variation between the slices of baloney, and you don't want the flavor to be too strong. You don't want somebody to get too excited when they're eating a slice of baloney, right? And you certainly don't want to see the artist's signature on the slice of baloney — you just want baloney. And if I'd wanted to go into corporate work — faceless, anonymous, submerged work — I wouldn't have bothered to go into film in the first place. Don Jacoby and I stayed on the project a few weeks until we saw that it wasn't the kind of working conditions we enjoyed, and then we just kind of faded off, let them do it themselves. I don't like to do stuff that isn't fulfilling to me. Television is not meant to be fun to anybody, neither the makers nor the viewers; it's just meant to put something in between advertisements, that's all.

KG: What can you tell us about the humor in this film?

DO'B: I never mean to break reality with the humor; this is not *AIRPLANE!* I have my own taste in humor; I'm seldom amused by humor which breaks the quality of reality; that is to say, when characters break the reality of how they would behave to get a laugh — I stop laughing then. One of the types of humor I enjoy most is seeing believable people put into an impossible situation, and seeing how very fallible people behave when confronted with a situation that nobody can cope with — then I can find lots of possibilities for humor, because in my life I've seen a lot of fallible people subjected to great stress. I've seen the way they behave and, I've got to tell you, I've had a lot of fights with my producer and my

crew and my cast, even my D.P., while making this film over moments in which they felt I was asking characters to behave in an unreasonable way, which I know from personal experience and fact is the way people behave in a crisis. During a sudden, disastrous accident, for example, a lot of people freeze; they stand there frozen and don't do anything while horrible things happen in front of them. I got a lot of static from Hemdale (Films, co-producer of the film); they said, "When that's happening, your characters stand there like a bump on a log. They don't look horrified or jump around and do something." I said, "Well, sometimes people do and sometimes they don't." So that's where I'm trying to derive the humor: take normal, fallible people, put them into a situation that perhaps no one could cope with, and see in what fallible ways they react to it, and how they attempt to deal with it. And I have a "dream" cast; I took eight months to cast the film.

KG: Does RETURN take place primarily in two locales?

DB: Well, like any low-budget film we have to limit our locales—yes it does. It takes place in and around a cemetery, and in the respective buildings around it. I had to keep myself from having too many locations or it couldn't have been done. It's like the old Corman films, he would do them in a few simple sets. The trick is to, when you're working under such claustrophobic conditions, make it rich

enough so that it doesn't "feel" quite that set-like and claustrophobic. When you're working with limited stuff, you try to make that limited stuff as rich as you can.

KG: Of the films you have written but not directed, which are you most happy with?

DB: ALIEN, I suppose. I think it was a better film than BLUE THUNDER.

KG: How long did it take you to write RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD?

DB: Real quick; it was the quickest thing I ever wrote. I was under pressure. I wrote it in about a month.

KG: How long does it usually take you to write a feature?

DB: Three to six months. Part of that is research, and we did our research on this film during pre-production. We visited many mortuaries, witnessed embalmings, went to crematoriums and watched bodies being burned. The set you're seeing there is quite authentic, and the embalming in the film is quite authentic. I made things up while I was writing, and then I corrected those inventions in pre-production.

Our half-hour lunch ended 10 minutes late, so I thanked Dan O'Bannon, a screenwriter whose work I've always admired and enjoyed, as everyone headed back downstairs.

When on the set again, I asked Clu Gulager how he'd come to be cast as the lead in the picture.

"I think they wanted Peter Graves for this role—like Peter; I really like his work—but, for some reason it didn't happen, and I jumped at it when I was offered the part because I thought I saw the chance for this film to take off like a bat out of hell. The script, to me, was wonderful. I really liked it, and I was very impressed with this man's writing."

We then set a date to meet on the night of Nov. 7, when the film is set to open in Westwood, the fashionable area of UCLA. (I'd met and said hello to him there a couple of times in the past). "I sit somewhere in the first to third rows," he said. Clue then told me that he's almost gotten the lead in HOWLING 2 ("It's a very good script," Judith Everitt told me), now filming in Yugoslavia under the direction of Philippe (MAD DOG MORGAN, THE BEAST WITHIN) Mora. "But then the casting lady got me this, which I'm very happy to be in!" Final rehearsals for the crematorium scene then began, and it was time for me to leave.

I am really looking forward to seeing RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD. After reading a four-page synopsis of the first part of the film, I can tell you that it should be funny, gory, and full of action.

And, under the knowledgeable writing and directing hands of Dan O'Bannon, and with a fine cast of fresh and seasoned character actors, ROTLD should be a welcome addition to the genre.

EYES WITHOUT A FACE

By TOMMY GIBBONS

Long before H.G. Lewis rained his first meat packing plant, cinema splatter started dropping its way onto the screen. Inspired by the stage splatter of The Theatre du Grand Guignol, French director Georges Franju took note of the gruesome effects and decided to use them in his first (and only) horror film, LES YEUX SANS VISAGE (EYES WITHOUT A FACE) was made in 1959 but release in the United States didn't occur till 1962. And when it was released, the title became THE HORROR CHAMBER OF DR. FAUSTUS. Franju had to fight France's strict policy of censoring scenes of graphic violence.

EYES WITHOUT A FACE focuses on a plastic surgeon (Pierre Brasseur) whose daughter (Edith Scob) is terribly scarred in a fiery crash caused by his own reckless driving. The good doctor, driven by the idea of restoring his daughter's features, lures victims who resemble her to his castle and attempts to graft their face onto his daughter's. The tension, augmented by an eerie Maurice Jarre (THE YEAR OF LIVING DANGEROUSLY) score, reaches its peak during the operation scenes. Poetic justice finishes the tale when the doc's loved attack dogs mistake him for liver snaps.

EYES doesn't frighten audiences into cardiac arrest, but Franju never intended for it to. The protagonist, Edith Scob, whose face is covered for most of the film with a

mannequin-like mask, wanders around the set lamenting her condition, acts as a guinea pig for several unsuccessful face grafts, and calls her former lover—silently listening to his "Hello!" and then, lacking the courage to speak, hangs up on him. Her antics are amplified by Eugene Schaffiat's black and white cinematography.

However, the real star of EYES has to be the grafts. Franju could have shot the transplants suggestively, using a montage of bloodied sponges and scalpels. Obviously, Georges choose not to follow tradition and instead he placed the camera directly on Scob, showing the entire graft in detail. The most graphic portion of the sequence takes place when the victim's face is removed in one piece, resembling Scob's rubber mask. On the heels of this scene comes another opportunity for Franju to use a few more graphic close-ups. Scob looks great for a while, but things start getting a little rough around the edges. Franju dwells on a series of shots showing Scob's rejection of the graft. No make-up artist was listed in the credits, but whoever was responsible did an extremely credible job.

The dog attack sparks Franju's last graphic sequence, and he turned up the burners for it. The poor professor watches helplessly as his appendages and organs are ripped from his body. Being an "art" director, Franju wasn't about to leave the audience with queasy stomachs. The last scene focuses on Scob's pity for the many animals the doctor experimented

on. She lets them all loose, walks outside, and six doves light on her upstretched arms. This seems a little pretentious because, up to this point, Franju's opus has resembled the cream of Universal's halcyon days—an homage nearly ruined by Scob's posturing. But EYES still shines in comparison with attempts at traditional horror spiced with gore.

Gads, if Max Maurey, the inventor of "splatter," could see what shape the descendants of his Theatre du Grand Guignol have taken, he would scream, "C'est Magnifique!"

THE SPLATTER SHOPPE

The following one-sheet posters are available for \$8 each: Mausoleum, Alone in the Dark, Gremlins, Whispering Death (Chris Lee), Terror Eyes, Don't Open the Window.

The following pressbooks are \$5 each: The Initiation, Alone in the Dark, Paranoia (12 pages), Double Exposure, Texas Chainsaw Massacre, Xtro, Mortuary, God's Bloody Acre.

The following color souvenir program books are \$10 each: Alien, Invasion of the Body Snatchers (1978), The Spy Who Loved Me.

16mm Special: Last House on the Left reel 1. The last 30 min. in color and sound of one of the screen's most violent films, directed by Wes Craven. Includes the 'oral castration' and chainsaw scenes. Only \$50 plus \$3 shipping.

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Splatter Times Contributor Tim Ferrante was fortunate enough this summer to meet with one of the world's most acclaimed horror directors — Italy's Dario Argento. Tim and Dario got together at a private party in New York City, also attended by Dario's wife and favorite leading lady, Daria Nicolodi (right). After their visit, Dario and Daria

returned to Italy to begin work on their latest, PHENOMENON, which co-stars Daria with Donald Pleasance and Dalia di Lazzaro (remembered from ANDY WARHOL'S FRANKENSTEIN). Meanwhile, U.S. fans are still waiting for the release of Argento's UNSANE (aka TENEBRAE) from Bedford Films.



A brutal rape leaves this actress in a vile state from CURSE OF THE ALPHA STONE, an upcoming release from Jeff Hegue's Arkansas-based Majestic International Pictures. Jeff has jumped into the horror/exploitation scene with both feet through his acquisition of ALPHA STONE; STEP SISTERS, a Texas-made tale of sex and murder; and INVA-

SION OF THE GIRL SNATCHERS, which promises girl-grabbing zombies. Jeff tells us he's currently negotiating with BLOB producer Jack Harris about a possible co-production deal. Who knows — Jeff may be just the person to put Arkansas on the exploitation map! Photo provided by Jeff Hegue — Majestic International Pictures.



(Top) Excellent make-up work by Gianetto de Rassi from Lucio Fulci's *HOUSE BY THE CEMETERY*. (Bottom) Well-known make-up effects man John Buechler (whose work can be seen in *FORBIDDEN WORLD*, *MAUSOLEUM*, *DEATHSTALKER*, and the forthcoming *GHOULIES*) poses with the "mechane-man" he created for the hard rock group

Dio's video *LAST IN LINE*. The eye-catching video was directed by Don Coscarelli of *PHANTASM* and *BEASTMASTER* fame. Our next issue will include a look at John's newest project, *ELIMINATORS*. Photo by Bob Villard — Talent Access.



(Top) Fun in the tub from New Line Cinema's upcoming **BLIND DATE**, starring Lana (DEATHSTALKER) Clarkson, Keir Dullea, and Joseph Bottoms. (Bottom left) Gary Levinson of Miami as he appears in the video film **LITTLE BOY — SNUFFED**, with make-up by R. Gonzales. Gary was

last onscreen as a zombie in **SHOCK WAVES**, starring Peter Cushing. (Bottom right) A corpse from Baltimore director Don Dahler's **NIGHT BEAST**, which is now available on video.

LARRY BUCHANAN

ZONTAR EYE CREATURES MARS NEEDS WOMEN CREATURE OF DESTRUCTION CURSE OF THE SWAMP CREATURE

By KRIS GILPIN

I first discovered the films of Larry Buchanan on late-night TV as a teen, from Channel 6 in Miami and Channel 12's (from neighboring West Palm Beach) "Creature Feature" program, and I was delighted by their low-budget antics. Later, I was to see *GOODBYE, NORMA JEAN* and *HUGHES AND HARLOW: ANGELS IN HELL*, theatrically in South Florida and, on Aug. 6, 1984, finally got a chance to interview Larry Buchanan over the phone in L.A. He is an extremely nice fellow, and spoke with me that morning for nearly 70 minutes.

Kris Gilpin: (After Buchanan had turned off his home computer) What type of computer do you have?

Larry Buchanan: I have an IBM PC. It's made my life much simpler. At first it's very frustrating to write on, but after about a month or two word processing is fantastic with Wordstar and scriptwriting is just a breeze.

KG: I thought we might start with a general history of how you got started in the film business.

LB: I grew up in an orphanage in Texas and was adopted by The Variety Clubs of America, which is a national organization made up of people in the motion picture business who take care of the Will Rogers home in Oklahoma and the Woodland Hills home here in California for old actors. I was kind of unofficially adopted by them and, eventually, got a job here at Fox in the prop department; this was 1942 and I was 18. I was doing acting work at Fox — bit pieces with Greg Peck in *THE GUNFIGHTER* and things like that — and grew up more or less as a Fox contract player in about two years, fast, but I really only wanted to make films; I wanted to be a director and producer and writer but, in the early 40's the union wouldn't let you get through the gates. You couldn't get on a crew or even learn to direct; but Woody Van Dyke (W.S. Van Dyke, 1889-1953), who was one of the great directors of all time, cut in the mold of John Huston and Wellman, had classes in his Beverly Hills home in editing. There were no cinema degrees being given in Dallas, so that's where we learned our craft. He said, "Get to New York. Go to the Signal Corps Photographic Center where they'll pay you to direct." So I went to New York and, while acting in the theatre in the evening, I went out to the old Biograph Studios on Long Island, and we made training films for the military for a couple years. Then I was invited back to

my home town, Dallas, to head up Jameson Studios there; they had invited me down there after they had seen my first feature. I was in a play with Jack Klugman, and I took Jack to the Big Ben country where he played the heavy in the thing called *APACHE GOLD*, my first feature, a \$17,000 black and white western. The leading lady, who was playing a Mexican, was Neill Adams, who later became Steve McQueen's first wife and bore him two sons. Anyway, the Jamesons liked the films and said, "We need a director down here because they're making international commercials," and so forth, and that (filmmaking) was the beginning of the big boom out in Texas; we started something down there that's gotten very big now, second only to L.A. I think. Jameson gave me a free hand, which meant I could do features in between; they said, "Fine. If you find the time, make your features." So I made a thing called *FREE, WHITE AND 21* (AIP, 1963); it was the first of the blacksploitation pictures. I had made other pictures before then, but you can almost forget them — you're talking about *THE NAKED WITCH*, which I made for \$8,000 in color and 16mm; I made *NAUGHTY DALLAS*, in which we actually used clips of Jack Ruby, who would years later come to shoot Oswald — all kinds of weird things happened down there, but I attribute my first feature with any clout in the market place as *FREE, WHITE AND 21*. It was in the spring of 1963 and our film, which was made for \$40,000 in black and white was in the top ten grossing pictures in the U.S. for about four months. It was an incredible success for AIP and they said, "Name your ticket; we need pictures. We want some cheap, fast, color pictures; we want half-ass names in them, and we want them now." So we signed a contract for three at first; this went on to three more, then three more; I did about nine or 12 of those. And between "those" pictures I had a deal; I had a deal between a deal between a deal, in which I could do what I call my "personal pictures." Things like, for example, *STRAWBERRIES NEED RAIN*, in which I defy you to tell that apart from a Bergman picture. Now, I know that's a very specious, immodest statement, but I started out to prove something — I love to do these things, Kris. I said, "Look, I can take \$50,000 and go into the German Hill country of Texas, where it looks like Sweden, and make a film with three characters, and I can put Ingmar's names on it and they'll accept it. We actually pulled it off. Now, of course later I put

my name back on it after we got the distribution.

KG: You actually put Bergman's name on it?

LB: Absolutely, and we opened in an art house in Dallas, and all the SMU students came and raved about it. Of course, the press was in on it: I could not do that, it would be an illegal infringement, so I told them that it was nothing more than an experiment and that I would take it off after that engagement. But anyway, that's beside the point; that's a personal picture. I did several personal pictures; one called *HIGH YELLOW*. Because I'd done so well with *FREE, WHITE AND 21*, *HIGH YELLOW* was a picture about a young girl passing for white. So all of those pictures; *CREATURE OF DESTRUCTION*, *IT'S ALIVE* — by the way, mine was the first *IT'S ALIVE*. Larry Cohen came along later and made a thing called *IT'S ALIVE*, which of course did a whole lot better than we did, then he made *IT'S ALIVE 2*. I don't sue people about anything, but I did have the first *IT'S ALIVE*.

KG: How much did those AIP pix cost to produce?

LB: They averaged, believe it or not, between 20 and 22 thousand dollars, and that 'included' John Agar, say, at \$1,500 a week for three weeks. I never spent more than two weeks except on the Agar pictures. On the Tommy Kirk pictures — *IT'S ALIVE* for example, we shot in a cave in Arkansas for seven days, for \$14 or \$15 thousand dollars, using the new fast 16 Ektachrome. I never blew them up; they're in a New York lab right now and I own the theatrical rights; but they did not have theatrical property then, although something is shaping that might put them in theatres finally. But it would be done in a very unique way. Some people said *IT CAME FROM HOLLYWOOD*: we got to talking at a gathering here and very jokingly — I had a drink in my hand, I think — I said, "Well, I think I'm gonna take the best clips from all those pictures and make a film called *IT CAME FROM HUNGER*." It would be the story of my being abducted by young film-cult kids leaving a theatre where they're been hooked — they're looking for something to replace *ROCKY HORROR* and *MARS NEEDS WOMEN* might be it, you see. So they take me up to a mansion in the hills and make my projectionist, Igor — who is a hunchback who could never make it as an actor — screen all of my pictures. They tie me up like they did Malcolm McDowell in *CLOCKWORK ORANGE*, hold my eyes open and make me look at all this

crap for four days without sleep. Well, someone took me seriously, so I might actually be doing a few clips from each picture, including A BULLET FOR PRETTY BOY with Fabian. I would have IT CAME FROM HUNGER starring Fabian, John Agar, Tommy Kirk, Les Tremayne, Franfine York — I could go on and on.

KG: I bet if you put that on videotape, it'd sell well.

LB: It's funny you should mention that, because I have a little video playback here, and I went up to get something to show the family the other night — I had them over — I think I was trying to find GREEN MANSIONS with Audrey Hepburn, and I came across a title which I know very well, but I didn't know you young people knew it: REFFER MADNESS, that's very interesting, because that goes back to when I first got here. The leading lady, a very attractive blond girl who was about eight years my senior, kind of took me under her wing — it was not a gigolo relationship, but it was a relationship. Anyway, (the guy at the video store) said, "We need more of that kind of thing (camp). We have this out all the time, even more than things like CLOCKWORK." So I'm glad to hear your response to that, because I like to get a younger response, after all, I'm crowding 60 now.

KG: It would be terrific fun; I've wanted to get your films on tape for years.

LB: Well, I was thinking of going to New York and going from the original negatives — that's the way to make a tape transfer; you can work from a composite print, but it's not as good quality. I'd go up to a one-inch on every thing (all the films), then come back and edit it, then go back and only take those sections I like and go up to 35 negative.

KG: You should release films like ZONTAR and MARS NEEDS WOMAN separately; I bet they'd sell.

LB: I honestly believe that. And now that my son, Barry Buchanan, has realized he's not going to make enough acting, he wants to try to learn to edit, so I think I'll put him to work.

There was an article in TV Guide last month that mentioned MARS NEEDS WOMEN twice as being on the BBC, and the guy who wrote it talked about the fact that England ran the 50 worst pictures of all time, and he wound up loving MARS NEEDS WOMEN, and said he's love to get it. And then, of course, along comes last week's Rolling Stone, reviewing Peter Wolf's new album, in which the number "Mars Needs Women" is the no. 1 number. So all of a sudden these things are coming back to haunt me.

KG: What do you think of the Peter Wolf song? I haven't heard it yet.

LB: I've heard it, and I had fun listening to it; I think my sons would like it better than I do. I'm a folk musician, and made my living that way for a couple of years. But I love rock — such as Elton John. As a matter of fact, the film we just finished is DOWN ON US, which is the story of the elimination, or silencing, of Jams Joplin, Jams Hendrix, and Jim Morrison; it was all a conspiracy. We have all that on film and it's finished. That opens in a couple months.

KG: You're saying that it's true, that it was a conspiracy?

LB: It's true; we can tell you now it's true. We couldn't tell you last year, but we can tell you now: it's true. The man who worked with us over the several years was the same man who helped me on THE TRIAL OF LEE HARVEY OSWALD. You see, we knew Oswald, and yet nobody ever came and interrogated us; the Warren Commission didn't ask me about Oswald. We made our film shortly after the murder of Kennedy, and we had stuff in there that is still not in the Warren Commission and, believe it or not — what was it, 15 years later?

LB: Absolutely; there was no body in the coffin, no doctor and no death certificate. We thought people would put it all together because, on the very day that Morrison died in the south of France his wife Pamela took her life here. No one was able to put that together, and finally, of course, we decided to go ahead and do the film after a couple people got out of the act. We had to eliminate Haig from the film — we could tell you a lot of things about Haig — we had to cut that out because he's a living person, and there's only a slight reference to Nixon, very little. So it's a mataly a rock story.



Larry Buchanan poses with Jenny Newman on the set of MISTRESS OF THE APES (1981)

— Chuck Fried here picks up and does almost the same thing we do. Now, where he entrapped himself, and where we do have apologies from him, and I refuse to sue him; but anyway, where he entrapped himself was using stuff that was not public record, but 'our' record. The point is, the man who helped us on that was Second in Command of the F.B.I. for 32 years. Our children started growing up together in Dallas, although he lived in Washington, and we know a lot of things; we know a whole lot about Wounded Knee we could tell you, but we're not going to do that. But I can tell you that Hendrix and Joplin were silenced by an ad hoc of what they call Plausible Denial Committee, by money washed through Mexico, because of the upcoming 1972 election of Nixon. It's all true, and everybody 'knows' it in Washington, but no one can put their finger on it. And Morrison beat it! He staged his death in Paris, he didn't die until 1974 instead of 1971. Very few people know that; we have the documentation.

KG: Morrison was alive for three years, after staging his death?

KG: Bill Thurman was your Dick Miller, so to speak. What's he doing now, and how'd you guys get together?

LB: (Laughs) Bill was a professional wrestler in Texas and, I don't remember if it was THE EYE CREATURES or what — maybe it was ZONTAR — but in an early picture I needed a real tough guy to play a cop. And he and John Agar got on very well, and we became very close friends. Bill became part of what I call my stock company; good, dependable day-players who could probably never really make it as (full-fledged) stars, but certainly can make good cops, truck drivers, waitresses and so forth. They're all down in Dallas; there's a good talent pool down there now. I started using the same people over and over because they were good, and Billy, believe it or not, has a tremendous international reputation; I got all kinds of letters (about him). I gave Steve McQueen his first job: when we got back to New York we were doing some looping, and Steve was out with a play, intermittently, with Melvyn Douglas, and Steve was in town to see Neil — I had introduced him to

her. He came over to loop for me and said, "This is the first time I've done a loop job. I like it!" And the rest, as you know, is history. Anyway, the reason I bring Steve up is not my relationship with him, but the fact that when he saw Billy Tharman one night on television — and at 2:05 in the morning he'd watch these things, not major pictures — he called me through somebody and wanted to know who this guy is and where he could get him. He then started using Billy — he used him right up to TOM HORN, even if it was just to have him on the set. You know, there's a lot of that going on — John Ford used to do it — where a filmmaker would like a guy so much that, even though he wouldn't have anything for him, he'd put him on the payroll just to have him around. Just to be around for talk, and to chew the fat, talk about the old times, or whatever. So Billy has remained a friend; he works in Texas, he does a lot of commercials, he'll fly out here and do a thing for Ouncy — they'll pay for him to come out here and do three days. Look at Spielberg, when he was doing CLOSE ENCOUNTERS!

KG: He was looking at the monitor at the beginning of the film!

LB: That's right, Billy Tharman. And you realize they could've gotten a million actors for that, right next door. And a lot of people have done that with him; they call him in for one day; they've got ten thousand people here who could do that role, but they like Billy. He has an appeal to audiences; he took ZONTAR away from John Agar, as the cop.

KG: How did you learn your AIP pix had been dubbed into Yiddish?

LB: I was at the Cannes film festival with GOODBYE, NORMA JEAN, which is quite a successful film of mine — I'm still getting money from it, and that was eight years ago — I was at the Carlton and I got a call from the lobby from a man using broken English who says his crew is there, and they'd like to interview me about MARS NEEDS WOMEN. And I say, "Oh, shit. Who is this? Who's kidding me?" And I hung up. I thought it was a friend of mine having fun, or drunk or something. They called right back and I had them come up; I didn't believe it but, sure enough, in come about five guys and a lady with a script in her hand, and they told me that MARS had been dubbed into Yiddish and was very successful on TV in Israel and throughout the Yiddish-speaking world. And I thought through the entire hour conversation that I was being put on, so I was very guarded until it occurred to me that "nobody" is this good an actor — five or six people cannot walk in here and be that good; these people are "serious." And so then I relaxed and started helping them, but at first I just kept waiting for the bomb to drop, for someone to say, "Someone put us up to do this." But no, they were quite serious, because (those films) 'do' have a staying power, and I wish I could remember the expression that author of the TV Guide article used to explain these pictures. He said, "It is not that they are that good — in fact, many of them are very bad — but what we must study is: why do they endure? Mr. Buchanan only spent a pittance on these, and yet somehow they continue to play."

I do want to go to New York soon about (my films), because the marketplace today is so strange; people are looking for some escape theater, and I think that some people will get just as much enjoyment out of something like MISTRESS OF THE APES, which (chuckles) was made in ten days in 1981. Now, that can't be done by anybody, and it was in 35mm color. The guy that owns it from CineWorld, who financed that, has done some test dates with it in Europe and they love it, and he's done some test dates in Florida and they love it. I'm talking now about drive-ins and small theaters — we're talking about a picture that cost less than \$60,000 in 1981.

KG: But these are the fun pictures.

LB: That's the key word. I can go out here and do something like HUGHES AND HARLOW: ANGELS IN HELL — it's a tax deal. I worked hard on it, for what little money they gave me, but it was no fun because I found out in the second week of principal photography that it was to be a tax shelter, all of a sudden all the fun went out of it. I don't play that game, that's not my world: I wanted people to see it, and Nicolas Von Sternberg, Josef Von Sternberg's son, shot the film — he shot several pictures with me — and we love HUGHES AND HARLOW: it's at the UCLA Film Library and they do have a lot of requests for it. It's unassuming, it's sincere, it's cheap (chuckles). Lindsay Bloom has gone on to become the leading lady with Stacy Keath in his new series, and these are nice people; these were enjoyable people to work with and, in 30 years, I have yet to have any actor say he would not go back to work with me for scale. Many of them have moved on up to bigger money, of course. For example, in A BULLET FOR PRETTY BOY (AIP, 1970) I gave Morgan Fairchild her first job.

KG: What has happened with THE LOCH NESS HORROR (1982)?

LB: THE LOCH NESS HORROR has been bought by CineWorld in Florida, had some test dates, and what happened was that two things were wrong: number one, the title was wrong — it sounds like a Loch Ness where. You try to explain to an exhibitor you've got a film called THE LOCH NESS HORROR, he says, "LOCH NESS WHERE, what's that?" So it's now just called NESSIE, and the bloodletting was let out of it — it becomes now more of a Disney thing: it's a good monster, it's more of an E.T. monster now. And the distributor called me recently and his first two test dates were very nice; it was at drive-ins and a couple hardtops that cater to the family-types — we were trying it as a straight horror, it was just not bloody enough. I am not a bloodmaker; I don't do that. Even in CREATURE OF DESTRUCTION I don't believe in running blood — I don't believe in pulling arms off of people and gushing blood. I don't fault the people who do it; after all, one of my proteges is Tobe Hooper. Fine, do that if that's your thing; I never discouraged any of them. I said, "Oo what you do well, and if you happen to do, say, camp well, do it — I mean, at least you can work." You see, the important thing in film — and I told the students this when I talked to USC a couple times — is to make films, and if you can't make anything but 8mm porno, do it. Make

film! Hollywood is perimeter-bound now, that even very fine filmmakers can't start a picture because it takes seven years to mount it or finance it; I'd rather see that artist go sell his car — and many of them did in the old years — mortgage your house and go make something you believe in. I think Hollywood as such will be a graveyard in ten years, and I think if it all be Ollas, New York, the Bahamas, Florida, and so forth. Even the finishing is too expensive here. I can fly to Ollas with all of my material and totally post-produce a film at ten cents on the dollar. And the actors are beautiful, the crews are great — we have I.A. crews down there, we have non-union crews, we have very fine houses of equipment. And this is true in Colorado or... not just in Texas; I happen to favor that because that's where I started.

KB: Right. You in fact hold a record for directing in 1968, don't you?

LB: Six or seven pictures over a period of 12 to 14 months. Some of them were the AIP pictures, and I'm pretty sure I did COMANCHE CROSING in that time. I did what was really a feature documentary called THE OTHER SIDE OF BONNIE AND CLOYDE with Burl Ives narrating, and that was interesting.

KG: I've been waiting years for someone to put you in a book. What's the chance of that happening soon?

LB: Well, my script/continuity girl wants to do something, and has asked for pictures; I very rarely retain a company photographer because that's expensive; that's another item you can forget because, in today's market, you just need five or six shots to promote a film, you do not need 3,600 stills the way they shoot on a feature — they all wind up in a warehouse. At the very worst you can go to your negative and reprint, because you do need a couple lobby stills; you can go to out-takes and get actual production stuff; it's a hair soft but it's still workable. Anyway... my own thing — it was half in jest, but I may have to do it — is my own autobiography called 'TIS PAST because I noticed that after we went to Tunisia and broke the ground with the first Hollywood feature to be shot entirely there, that was REBEL JESUS, everyone is going to Tunisia to make religious pictures now; they're using our same liaison people, so they keep me informed. I'd love to do (my autobiography) and now, with my computer, it'd be a lot easier.

KG: How many films have you written and directed.

LB: I'd say I've done 20 to 25 features; some of them I've even forgotten.

KG: What else, besides GOWN ON US, is coming up?

LB: I'm going to MIFED in Milano in October to present three or four bigger ideas. One of them will be THE EIGHTH OAX, a beautiful novel that I'd like to do. Another might be a thing called TORTURE GARDEN, in which I will play a lead, an older writer who takes a French girl to an island in the South Pacific, not for kinky-panky but to translate French for me while I work on a screenplay. A young man shows up in a boat, and it becomes a three-way. KNIFE IN THE WATER-type



thing. Also, some people want me to continue with my idea of WHO KILLED POOR MARILYN* and use some cuts from GOOD-BYE, NORMA JEAN and redo that night she was killed, of which I could tell you something that would shock you! It's not that she was killed — we know she was killed, of course — it's how many 'times' she was killed, who did it and why. She was killed three times that night; this is the truth. So, if no one wants any of these ideas in October, I'll go do WHO KILLED POOR MARILYN*. And that's a double-entendre title, because she was no poor girl, my friend. I knew the woman at Fox and I hate to see the crap that's going around about her. Plus, I have a script which is the result of my seeing a snuff film in the early 40's, and the more recent, real snuff film in Rio in which they killed children, the children were bought from their parents and killed and, as an Aquarius, it just boils me blood. It makes me so angry. I have a script called THE COD SQUAD about a group of young ladies, each of whom has been raped who, realizing the police are doing nothing about the high rate of rape and child abuse, take their knives — one of the girls is a nurse — and castrate the men who get away from the police. It becomes a vengeance thing.

KG: How often do you hear from fans?

LB: From fans, it's almost daily. At first it was from people asking, "Where did you shoot SWAMP CREATURE or CREATURE OF DESTRUCTION?" or whatever, and many times trade people call me, they've seen one of my pictures and they ask me, "Where did you get 'that' location?" or whatever. There was a production manager for George Lucas who called before they made STAR WARS about Tunisia, and I got them in touch with the man who is now the liaison between Tunisia and the majors. And we even get calls from people who say, "You stole my story," the usual thing, and I say, "Check with the Writers Guild of America, and you'll see that we didn't." And sometimes the fans come up with some really strange questions. And, believe it or not, we got a call in Dallas from Europe about STRAWBERRIES NEED RAIN saying that we had confiscated one of Bergman's pictures and had retitled it — I loved it!

KG: That's the same green monster suit in IT'S ALIVE and SWAMP CREATURE and others, right?

LB: Oh, yes, we couldn't afford anything else. We put new ping-pong balls in the eyes — we could afford that — and maybe sprayed it again with paint, or maybe we'd do it down or something.

KG: And which films are your favorites?

LB: I'd say STRAWBERRIES NEED RAIN, without a doubt and, certainly from a fiscal standpoint as to paying the mortgage for a number of years, FREE, WHITE and 21 — it was a surprisingly big success for us, I loved HUGHES AND HARLOW and I'm going to try to do something about that one — I'm going to talk to Uncle Sam and see if I can get it and get it back into theaters. REBEL JESUS will be fine when I can put a new, contemporary frame on it; it was never really completed. Bob Jessup shot it in Techniscope, and he does DALLAS the series now, it was his first job and I got him for around \$200 a week, he's very expensive now. We wanted to give it the contemporary frame that'd be necessary to make the thing work, but the money-man said, "I like it the way it is, don't change it." And I said, "But it's not completed." So, now I own the picture, and I'm thinking seriously of working on that. REBEL JESUS was in 1972 and it only needs a week's work. I grew up in a religious orphanage and we were forced to study the life of Jesus and, although I'm not that religious myself, I am at least an authority on the Nazarene. There are very few things I'm an authority on, but that's one of them.

KG: One final question: have you any amusing anecdotes which happened during the shooting, perhaps involving Billy?

LB: Well, let me give you one. Billy was involved with Billy, John Agar and I had gotten to be pretty friendly, he the nice we did CURSE OF THE SWAMP CREATURE. We were out in the swamps and, by that time, John was pretty anxious to get back to L.A.; he was tired and, even though we're both Aquarius and both born on the same day, we started fighting, arguing with each other; I'm an easy-going character and I don't like to do that. So Billy was trying to keep us apart all day long and John said, "When that sun goes down, I'm going home." My contract said that, if I went beyond 6 o'clock I had to pay him for another week, so I worked my tail off that day; we probably did 10 or 15 minutes worth of cut screen time in that day. John was really rushing too, and, at the very last cut before the sun went down, he walked, although we were friends, he walked. The entire day's work was lost in the lab! I had to go and take everything else out and rework the film, because I couldn't bring John back; I didn't have the money. Funny thing is, I brought John Agar back for one more called HELL RAIDERS, which was a little war picture made after SWAMP CREATURE — I can't even remember the year — in which John played a typical cigar-chewing lieutenant lead. It worked out pretty well. Another incident hap-

pened during REBEL JESUS, and it's where I got my title 'TIS PAST from. My Tunisian liaison was just a young boy they assigned for me to interpret for me. The government gave me a Mercedes and gave him a Mercedes to work with, and I went to scout locations for the picture. We shot 300 miles into the desert where there's nothing but nomads, and once in every 40 or 50 miles you'd come to a gas station. Well, the liaison, whose name was Hamed, went ahead of me and I stopped at a gas station, and I was still on French frames. He filled up the tank and told me how much it was and, into my next hundred miles into the desert, I figured out in my head that, because I was still on French frames, I had paid \$180 to fill that tank. And I was so mad that, when I saw Hamed, I said, "Where were you? I just paid \$180 to fill the tank of this Mercedes!" And he said, "Mssr. Buchanan, 'tis past." And then he proceeded to give me his whole philosophy: "Tis past; it's gone. So that became the watchword in the movie; everytime a generator would blow or whatever, everyone'd say "'Tis past." It became a running joke, so that's why I want to make the name of my book, 'TIS PAST, OR HOW I FOUND TUNISIA, LOST GOD AND GOT OUT OF THE PICTURE BUSINESS.



LARRY BUCHANAN

Frances Raines — a 'B' Queen on the rise



Frances Raines

Horror/exploitation watchers will want to keep an eye on Frances Raines. You've probably never heard of this New York actress, but that may quickly change when her three recently-completed films go into general release.

After making her feature debut in director Buddy Cooper's *THE MUTILATOR* (previously announced here and in *Fangoria* as *FALL BREAK*), Frances quickly moved to the lead role in *DISCONNECTED*, a thriller where she stars as twin sisters, and *DORMITORY GIRLS*, a fast-paced J.D. actioner.

With three films completed, Frances is getting to be an old hand at genre fare, and she should be visible this year when *THE MUTILATOR* goes into general release — hopefully followed by *DISCONNECTED* and *DORMITORY GIRLS*. To stay busy in the meantime, she starts work this fall on *RYDER P.I.*, a detective spoof.

After attending a private screening of *THE MUTILATOR* on July 17 at ABC Television in New York (courtesy of Buddy and ST contributor Tim Ferrante), I met Frances the next day at Buddy and make-up effects man Ed Ferrell's Queens apartment, where she recalled her first plunge into film acting.

"I saw an ad in *Backstage* paper, and I didn't really want to go 'cause I knew where the studio was where they were holding the audition and I thought, 'It's not the best part of town,' but my boyfriend talked me into it." It's lucky that Frances has a persuasive boyfriend, since Cooper signed her to play one of

the film's victims following a successful screentest.

Frances says working on *THE MUTILATOR* was a very enjoyable experience "because there were just enough people there to help you feel like you're on, and yet not too many people. The hardest thing to do was to be scared in one section where a closet door opened and something falls out at me. Getting that to feel like it was really going to scare me was hard."

Her own death scene, a drowning, was completely bloodless compared to the other cast members — whose grisly demises have earned the pic an unrated classification. A good example is Connie Rogers, who has a fishing gaff plunged between her legs, then we see a close-up as the metal tip protrudes from her stomach. "I didn't see that filmed because of the nature of it," Frances says. "I was going to watch and decided my stomach couldn't take it so I left."

Aside from *THE MUTILATOR*, Frances is especially looking forward to the release of *DISCONNECTED* because of her dual role. "Being twin sisters was a trip, and I was really pleased with the first screening we had, to hear people say they didn't know it was the same girl playing both parts."

When all three of Frances' films go into general release, she may very well be on the road to 'B' queen stardom. Let's hope so, and we wish the very best to this talented, attractive actress.

Donald Farmer



(Left) In the Queens apartment of director Buddy Cooper (right) and make-up artist/sound editor Ed Ferrell, Frances takes a close look at the head and torso used for Ben (2,000 Maniacs) Moore's startling decapitation scene in

THE MUTILATOR. (Right) On the set of *THE MUTILATOR*, co-director John Douglass and second assistant cameraman Ted Fry horse around after the demise of 'Big Ed.' whose severed legs are lying in the foreground.

Obscure

Splatter

By GARY WILLIAMS

THE PSYCHOPATH

(1980?) Hong Kong. Director: Ho Meng-hua. Script: I. Kuang.

An amazing Chinese rip-off of Dario Argento's *BIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUM*, which actually manages to stand on its own merits as a classy thriller. The plotline follows Argento's film almost scene by scene.

Just as in *BIRD*, this film opens with a murder which is not all what it appears to be. The film's young hero, who is a mystery writer himself, sees what he thinks is a young woman being attacked by a masked man. Of course, the woman is actually doing the attacking, and the man was her husband. This woman had been disfigured by a gang of criminals when she refused to smuggle drugs for them. She had begun to systematically kill all those who were responsible.

As in Argento's film, a key to the mystery is an odd sound heard over the telephone. Instead of an exotic bird, the clue is an odd cigarette lighter in the shape of a donkey which the killer's husband used to light his cigars. Again, as in *BIRD*, the woman's husband claims to be the real killer even as he is dying.

Yet another scene which duplicates *BIRD* occurs when the mystery-writer hero becomes a man into a hotel where a party is in progress at which all the guests are dressed identically.

Murders in *THE PSYCHOPATH* are bloody and involve the usual array of sharp instruments. Female nudity is very present. The combination of sex and violence places this film soundly in a context of the late 40's—early 70's Italian sexy thrillers by directors such as Argento, Bava, Martino, Lenzi, etc. This is definitely one to catch if it shows up at a Chinese-language theater in your city.

Of note is that the same director shot the excellent *REVENGE OF THE ZOMBIES* (*BLACK MAGIC II*) and *BLACK MAGIC*.

NIGHT OF THE DEMON

(1979. Director: James C. Wasson).

To the best of my knowledge, this must be the first gore Bigfoot film. There is no record of the film ever receiving an MPAA rating, but if submitted, it probably would have garnered an 'X' for violence.

Filmed in and around San Diego, California, this epic has something for everyone. See Bigfoot kill (and rape?) girl scouts; watch Bigfoot ripe a biker's crotch out; enjoy while Bigfoot pulls a student's intestines out and waves them around in the air. This film has all of this and more!

Besides the amazing violence, the film is structured in a very bizarre manner. The whole film is told in the flashback of a university professor who is the sole survivor of a group which went searching for Bigfoot. He relates the tale to the police and a psychiatrist from his hospital bed. While his tale unfolds

we are treated to flashback's within the flashback (which becomes a bit irritating, not to mention confusing).

Years earlier a strange cult had existed in the area where Bigfoot dwelled. He (being a healthy, horny Bigfoot) had raped the daughter of the leader of the cult. Her father had beaten her and seemingly made her lose the baby Bigfoot (this was told in yet another flashback and was somewhat vague). Daddy loses his mind, and burns himself to death in his cabin, leaving his daughter alone in the woods.

Somewhere along the line the cult had still stayed in existence and was apparently engaging in human sacrifice. The group of students and the professor encounter them and disrupt one of their ceremonies involving a young girl. Since the young girl then runs off with the cultists, this made absolutely no sense whatsoever. For that matter, the cult subplot never really meshes with the Bigfoot story and does nothing to move the story forward.

After completing his tale of woe to the cop and the doc, the professor lapses into sleep. The film ends with the doctor informing the cop that the professor is, of course, hopelessly insane and will be committed to an institution. Bigfoot presumably is left free to prowl, kill and rape to his heart's content.

NIGHT OF THE DEMON's gore effects are well done and once the Bigfoot appears there are killings about every five minutes. Location photography is crisp and enhances the feeling of isolation. Bigfoot himself is most often shot in ill-lit settings which help to conceal the tawdriness of his costume. This film is a real hoot and should have gained a wider notoriety had it been properly distributed.

A YOUNG GIRL FOR THE CANNIBALS

(1980. Director: Jesus Franco. Producer: Franco Prospero. Possibly known also as *THE CANNIBALS*).

With the glut of European cannibal and zombie films, it was inevitable that B-film veteran Franco would enter the field. The surprise is that his cannibal film is not as poorly

made as one might have expected from Franco's past performance.

The title of the film pretty much summarizes the plot. In an opening sequence the young girl of the title is kidnapped by cannibals after her mother and father are killed on their boat. She grows up to become the blond goddess of the cannibals (if you've seen this before just nod), and naturally saves a party of adventurers after it has been depleted by cannibal munching.

Gore is relatively subdued in this film, especially compared to films such as Lenzi's *MAKE THEM DIE SLOWLY* or Ruggero Deodato's *CANNIBAL HOLOCAUST*. One plus is that Franco refrains from his love affair with the zoom lens, so the film benefits from some good location photography. *CANNIBALS* is a pleasant time-waster and might just pop up on video from some small company.

EROTIC NIGHTS OF THE LIVING DEAD

(1979. Director: Joe D'Amato. Starring Laura Gemser.)

Be warned, despite an enticing title this is the absolute worst European zombie film I have ever seen. D'Amato, who has done mostly sex and violent horror in the past (*BURIED ALIVE*, *TRAP THEM AND KILL THEM*, *GRIM REAPER*, etc.), attempts a sex zombie which is too pathetic to even be amusing.

Any film in which Laura Gemser has less nude scenes than the living dead has something wrong with it. There is, however, plenty of sexy goings-on in an old hotel which used to be a monastery. The zombies are ancient monks who one would have thought would have looked with disfavor upon the orgies taking place, rather than joining in.

D'Amato could have used a good make-up man for his walking dead. They are knobby-kneed and scrawny looking and certainly don't look too dangerous. A lot of blood is spilled, including brains ripped out, etc., but the fuzzy photography, terrible sound and leaden acting sink any attempt at coherency.

Maybe there is a good sexy zombie film to be made, but this isn't it.



CAMERON MITCHELL

"THE KING OF BAD HORROR"

By DONALD FARMER

By his own count, Cameron Mitchell has appeared in 250 or more films and probably a thousand television shows. "I don't think anybody's worked more than I have," he says flatly, and — with the possible exception of John Carradine — he's probably right.

And Mitchell quickly points out that he's worked with the best — stars like Marilyn Monroe, Clark Gable, Gary Cooper, Jimmy Cagney, Marlon Brando... it's a list with no end in sight. "I've worked with every major star, in fact, I can't think of any I haven't worked with," he says. "I mean, you mention a major star of the last 30 years, and I've certainly had some relationship with them."

So why should *Splatter Times* readers take an interest in the career of this respected, always in demand performer — a guy who just likes to take it easy around his Palm Springs home when he's not shooting a new picture or making his thousand-and-first TV appearance?

Well, if you don't know the answer, then you're probably never seen *THE TOOLBOX MURDERS*, *NIGHTMARE IN WAX*, *BLOOD AND BLACK LACE*, or Mitchell's dozens of other fright appearances that stretch back to *FACE OF FIRE* and *GORILLA AT LARGE* in the 50's. As Michael Weldon puts it in the "Psychotronic Encyclopedia of Bad Horror," Mitchell is "the unheralded king of film horror."

Mitchell frankly admits that he avoids seeing most of his own pictures and says, "Probably the last ten pictures I made I haven't seen." And while his last ten films have included the critically praised hit *MY FAVORITE YEAR*, horror-violence fans can take heart that *FRANKENSTEIN ISLAND*, *SILENT SCREAM*, and *KILL SQUAD* help to round out the list.

A minister's son and a World War II bombardier, Cameron Mitchell got his start as a New York stage actor "when I was like 17 or 18. I did *THE TAMING OF THE SHREW* with Lynn Fontaine, where I had a small part. *DEATH OF A SALESMAN*, of course, was an enormous play. I was the first one to read those words aloud. I read them in the Taft Hotel in New Haven with Ella Kazan and Arthur Miller."

Kazan signed Mitchell to star as 'Happy' opposite Lee J. Cobb's Willy Loman, and Mitchell reprised his role in the 1952 film version with Frederic (DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE) March. By that time, Mitchell was a seasoned performer with over 10 years of stage and television experience, and *DEATH OF A SALESMAN* provided his first important role in a film career that hasn't slowed down since.

Respectable film historians would probably note 1953 as the year Mitchell starred with Marilyn Monroe, Lauren Bacall and Betty Grable in *HOW TO MARRY A MILLIONAIRE*. But for our purposes, the big news that year was Mitchell making his horror

debut in *GORILLA AT LARGE* (in 3-D) along with *SALESMAN* co-star Lee J. Cobb (who went on to *THE EXORCIST*), Ann Bancroft, and Lee Marvin. The film was one of those mad gorilla programmers apparently inspired by *MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE* — only the real killer turned out to be Bancroft in a monkey suit!

After appearing in *DESIREE* (1954) with Marlon Brando, *LOVE ME OR LEAVE ME* (1955) with Jimmy Cagney and in *Rogers and Hammerstein's CAROUSEL* (1956), Mitchell starred in a 'real life' horror picture directed by *HOUSE OF WAX* helmer Andrew de Toth. *MONKEY ON MY BACK* (1957) was "the most exhausting film I ever did," Mitchell says. He played Barney Ross, a war hero with three world boxing titles who was also tragically addicted to heroin. Mitchell admits that acting out the film's realistic withdrawal scenes "took its toll on me — at the end of it I collapsed and had a major operation. But it was a good film. In fact, the film was so well received by federal drug hospitals that it was shown to heroin and drug addicts."

Mitchell starred in a more traditional kind of horror picture two years later with *FACE OF FIRE* (1959), based on the Stephen Crane story *THE MONSTER* about a young man who is disfigured in a house fire. And two years later, Mitchell made the first film in what proved to be a long, well-received collaboration with Italy's greatest genre director, the late Mario Bava. Aside from producing a three-film Viking series (*ERIK, THE CONQUEROR: LAST OF THE VIKINGS* and *KNIVES OF THE AVENGER*), Mitchell and

Bava made 1964's *BLOOD AND BLACK LACE*, with Mitchell as a fashion salon owner whose models are meeting grisly deaths. The film's idea of having the killer wear a metal clawed glove was even repeated nearly 15 years later in "another" Mitchell film called *THE DEMON* (a.k.a. *MIDNIGHT CALLER*), not to be confused with Larry Cohen's *DEMON*.

"I really enjoyed working with Mario," Mitchell says. "In Italy they called him 'Maestro.' He was a great director and a very great person."

Nineteen sixty-six gave Mitchell two of his juicier shock roles, as a crazed botanist in *ISLAND OF THE DOOMED* (directed by *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS* star Mel Welles) and as an equally insane wax museum owner in *NIGHTMARE IN WAX*.

"When I first saw the script for that, I thought, 'Oh, my God, how are they going to film this?'" Mitchell recalls. "The original script had me hanging up girls and skinning them alive." Unfortunately for gore lovers, those who've seen *NIGHTMARE IN WAX* can testify that the films were toned down considerably for the finished film. There was still plenty of low-brow, low-budget fun, though, as Mitchell's acid-scarred character stalked through a wax museum where the 'statues'

were really some less-than-immobile actors.

Mitchell rounded out his 60's horror output with the Mexican-made *AUTOPSIA DE UN FANTASMA* (1967) co-starring John Carradine and Basil Rathbone (the two horror veterans reteamed that same year, without

A FASHION HOUSE OF GLAMOROUS MODELS BECOMES A TERROR HOUSE OF BLOOD!



Mitchell, for HILLBILLYS IN A HAUNTED HOUSE).

As always, Mitchell kept busy during the 70's with work in horror (HAUNTS and SCREAMERS) science-fiction (TV's THE STRANGER) and even a few Irwin Allen disaster pics like THE SWARM and FLOOD! But for Mitchell at his most demented, the picture to watch was THE TOOL BOX MURDERS (1978), which promised viewers would witness "the most atrocious crimes in American history."

"We had fun making that, but I didn't see it," Mitchell says. For any readers who haven't caught this one, Mitchell spends most of his time behind a ski mask as he drills, hammers, and nails his way through the female cast. Gore effects chronologists should not that THE TOOL BOX MURDERS featured a "death by screwdriver" scene before DAWN OF THE DEAD and provided the likely inspiration for virtually ever murder in DRILLER KILLER.

During the last few years, Mitchell has teamed with Jack Palance and Martin Landau in WITHOUT WARNING (1980), with Barbara Steele in SILENT SCREAM (1980), and most recently with John Carradine again for FRANKENSTEIN ISLAND (1982) directed by Jerry (INVASION OF THE ANIMAL PEOPLE) Warren. Also featured was HIDEOUS SUN DEMON star Robert Clarke, a tribe of friendly jungle girls, and a traditionally flat-headed, black suited Frankenstein monster. Mitchell, who says he barely remembers making this one, plays a mental patient who talks about his "lost Lenore" (shades of Poe!) and turns out to be the long-lost father of one of the jungle girls.

While he steers clear of seeing most of his pictures, Mitchell says that making horror/fantasy films is still fun because "they're very theatrical and I enjoy it. When I was a little kid I liked to play Dracula. I liked to put on a black bathrobe and white powder on my face and scare my kid brother."

In his private life, one of Mitchell's main interests is the study of "psychic healing" where operations are performed using human hands in place of scalpels. But there's a special reason for his interest — Mitchell says he was recently a psychic surgery patient!

"I had an ulcer and an abscess," he explains, "and this man in the Philippines operated on me with his bare hands." Mitchell even remained conscious during the operation because anesthetics are not used during such procedures, and he tells us that, upon returning to the U.S., his Beverly Hills doctor confirmed that his medical problem had been corrected — even though he had no surgical scar tissue!

For those who think psychic surgery sounds a bit on the supernatural side, be forewarned that the Mitchell household is also well-stocked with plenty of garlic. But Cameron isn't trying to ward off bloodsuckers — he's just a firm believer that garlic is one of nature's best health foods. "Americans don't like garlic because of the odor, but in Europe everyone eats it," he says.

With nearly 50 years as a professional actor behind him, Mitchell looks at directing as something he'd like to try in the future. He

emphasizes, however, "It would have to be the right project. I don't mind appearing in schlock, but I don't want to direct it."

REVIEWS



"LURID, OMINOUSLY LETHAL"

The stage is set for a movie full of the colorful nightmares of movies like *DON'T LOOK NOW* and *THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI*. The movie, which has a sizeable amount of nudity and sexual contact, tantalizingly plays with the viewer and has a high old time taking the audience along for the spooky ride. —Ernest LeGrand, New York Daily News

THE 4TH MAN

(Spectra Film) Quite honestly, I'd never heard of Dutch director Paul Verhoeven before seeing *THE 4TH MAN*, but — on the basis of this one film — I'd have to rank him as one of the most fascinating talents working today. It's really unfair to describe *THE 4TH MAN* as just another horror movie; a better description would be an erotic suspense thriller with an undercurrent of dark humor and boasting several of the year's most violently unforgettable gore sequences.

Admittedly, the posters for *THE 4TH MAN* might give the impression this is only another European "art" film, and it'd be a shame if that keeps the gore/exploitation crowd away. The fact is that *THE 4TH MAN* is a movie which succeeds just as well at entertaining splatter/sloazeblovers as it does the high-brow set. Verhoeven's film is constructed like an intricate puzzle that becomes more dazzling with every twist and turn, and the story is intercut with a nonstop barrage of fantasy/dream sequences which range from hypnotic beauty to grotesque shocks. Add to this the best cinematography in 'any' movie this year, a stand-out lead performance by Jeron Krabbe, and you have what automatically becomes one of the year's top genre releases.

Krabbe plays Gerard Reve, a bisexual Dutch writer who travels from Amsterdam as the story begins to speak before a literary society. But Reve is preoccupied during his lecture by a provocative blond named Chris-

tine (or maybe Christian, I can't remember) who constantly films his every movement with a home movie camera. He introduces himself after ending the speech, and is quickly invited to spend the night at her mansion.

After Reve beds down with her, he has a bizarre nightmare where she graphically castrates him with a pair of scissors (warning — this is one of the most genuinely shocking castration scenes ever, although it flashes on screen and off in less than five seconds).

The next morning, the girl unsuccessfully begs Reve to live with her — pointing out that she inherited a large fortune from her late husband. Reve is reluctant at first... until he discovers a letter and photo from one of her lovers named Herman. The photo of Herman standing on the beach instantly captivates Reve, who quickly announces his decision to stay with Christine after all. What she doesn't know is that he only wants to use her to get to Herman.

The plot becomes increasingly complicated from this point, so I'll just let you see *THE 4TH MAN* for yourself rather than spoil the surprises. Suffice it to say that Reve becomes slowly convinced that the mysterious woman he is staying with is actually a "witch" who wants to kill him. He learns that she has had three husbands who all died in freak accidents and, since she's now having simultaneous affairs with himself and Herman, he warns the young man that at least one of them will die. How this death will come about is hinted at by Verhoeven in two "eye-popping" fantasy scenes, including one shot where the "eye-hole" on a hotel door transforms into a human eye, then slides out of its socket while blood gushes around it.

I don't know if Verhoeven has made previous films which have gone unreleased in the United States, but I certainly hope that *THE 4TH MAN* marks the beginning of many more. Writing this review, it's really impossible to get across the strange, fascinating look and feel of *THE 4TH MAN* and its impossible-to-forget images. All I can do is encourage you to by all means see it when it plays your town.

THE 4TH MAN is like a mixture of Hitchcock, Bunuel, De Palma, and Roeg — but stamped with Verhoeven's utterly distinctive touch. What else can I say? Don't miss it!

Donald Farmer

GHOSTBUSTERS

Picture an old "Saturday Night Live" sketch expanded to almost two hours and throw in millions of dollars of special effects wizardry, and you have *GHOSTBUSTERS*. Bill Murray is his usual hilarious self, and Dan Aykroyd adds his lunacy to form a team of para-normal psychologyists.

When their university research grant is canceled, they embark on their own business catching para-normal phenomenon images and keeping them locked up in a special holding chamber. Business starts out pretty slow until they actually capture some ghosts and they then have more business than the team can handle.

GHOSTBUSTERS is one of the best attempts at comedy-horror since *ABBYCOSTELLO* met the different monsters many years ago. I was expecting a lot from

this film and it exceeded my expectations and then some. With all the big budget movies released this summer, **GHOSTBUSTERS** has to rate as one of the best.

Rodney Sims

THE INITIATION

(New World) The supernatural angle suggested by the ad campaign never materializes in **THE INITIATION**, which turned out to be yet another story of an asylum escapee who carves up castmembers. Coming after the disappointing **CHILDREN OF THE CORN**, this one shows that things aren't boding well for the 'new' New World Pictures. Maybe the production values have increased, but the sense of fun Roger Corman always injected into his productions seems conspicuously absent. Maybe the company's forthcoming **CRIMES OF PASSION** will be an improvement — at least they've fanned a top-rate director in Ken Russell.

Probably the best thing about **THE INITIATION** is the unexpected twist ending and a pretty funny costume party where somebody comes dressed as a giant pric, complete with dangling balls.

As a side note, **THE INITIATION** was shot entirely in Texas, and the last third of the film is set in a gigantic shopping mall/apartment complex — a place that's so huge, it makes the mall from **DAWN OF THE DEAD** look like a 7-11.

Of course, in comparing these films, one is quickly reminded that bigger isn't necessarily better.

D.F.

SAVAGE STREETS

(Motion Picture Marketing) Let me say from the outset that this review isn't based on watching a complete print of **SAVAGE STREETS**, but from seeing only a 20 minute 'production reel' which contains the film's key sequences. But from only viewing these highlights, I'd have to rank **SAVAGE STREETS** as a hard-edged film that won't disappoint Blair's **CHAINED HEAT** fans. The intensity reaches a fever pitch when a street punk hisses to Linda, "I'm going to cut your pussy into little pieces!" She responds by aiming her crossbow straight for his jugular.

It would be unfair to say unexcactly how Linda dispatches the film's lead punk, but you should enjoy the part where he tries to rape her with two arrows sticking out of his kneecaps. And, oh yes, for those who loved Blair's nude shots in **CHAINED HEAT**, there's more where that came from in **SAVAGE STREETS**.

Coming on the heels of the dreary **REVENGE OF THE DEAD** and the disappointing **CAGED WOMAN**, **SAVAGE STREETS** looks to be Motion Picture's Marketing's best offering since **GATES OF HELL** and should be a must-see on the exploitation circuits.

D.F.

SECRETS BEYOND THE DOOR

Despite the title, this has nothing to do with **BEYOND THE DOOR** or even Bava's **BEYOND THE DOOR II**. Instead, it's a retitled print of that early 70's cannibal

comedy **THE FOLKS AT RED WOLF INN**.

For those who can tolerate almost nonexistent gore, **SECRETS BEYOND THE DOOR** provides a serio-comic look at two senior citizen cannibals who run a seaside hotel. They offer free resort vacations as a lure for young things, who are latched up for a week, then dumped in the stew pot.

The film carries a completely undeserved R rating, and only the most undemanding of shocklovers will want to visit **RED WOLF INN**.

D.F.

REVENGE FROM PLANET APE

In our Blind Dead article back in issue 2, a rumor was mentioned that **TOMBS OF THE BLIND DEAD** (first of the four-part series) had been reissued under the ridiculous title **REVENGE OF THE PLANET OF THE APES**.

I found it pretty hard to believe that any distributor would sink so low as to coin the public by selling this great Blind Dead film off as a **PLANET OF THE APES** entry. But, sure enough, a tiny ad in the Nashville papers this summer announced that something called **REVENGE FROM PLANET APE** would be opening at two hardtop theatres.

Naturally, I had to drive down and investigate this situation. And incredibly enough, the film actually turned out to be **TOMBS OF THE BLIND DEAD** in a drastically edited form. While most of the violence was there, nearly 30 minutes of subplots and dialogue had been cut — leaving the film's running time at just over one hour! To make matters worse, a voiceover is added to the opening title sequence, telling us that a tribe of intelligence apes had been blinded and killed by evil humans long, long ago; now an army of ape zombies has risen from their graves to seek revenge!

I suppose I could be thankful for 'any' chance to finally see **TOMBS OF THE BLIND DEAD** on a big screen — even in this mutilated form. Luckily, I have a videotape of the film's showing on "Elvira" a few months back, so I can still be watching the original version after **REVENGE FROM PLANET APE** is long forgotten.

D.F.

SPLATTER UNIVERSITY

(Troma) Nearly every theatre in my area offers \$1.75 bargain matinees, which makes blowing money on an unbearable movie seem not so heavy a loss. But when I visited New York City this summer, I found to my sorrow that bargain matinees are nonexistent and you're expected to cough up five bucks a show, whether it's a great film like Lilliana Cavini's **BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL** (so far the year's best) or even **SPLATTER UNIVERSITY**.

I wasn't expecting a great deal from **SPLATTER UNIVERSITY**, but having run so many advance photos from it last issue, I at least hoped this would reach the minimal expectations of the genre. This wasn't to be the case, though, since **SPLATTER UNIVERSITY** provided me with the most inept, listless, and boring 50 minutes I've spent in a theatre in recent memory.

I won't go into a detailed breakdown of the

film's plot because there's always the chance this might stir your interest and actually 'encourage' you to see it. I already feel bad enough knowing that the photos I ran last issue may lead some of you to throw away your money on catching **SPLATTER UNIVERSITY** just as I did. Let me just say that **SPLATTER UNIVERSITY** is to 1984 what **DON'T GO IN THE WOODS** was to 1983 and what **DON'T GO IN THE PARK** was to 1982. Be warned.

D.F.

REVENGE OF THE DEAD

(Motion Picture Marketing) An Italian feature of little distinction is **REVENGE OF THE DEAD**, currently making the rounds in some of our lesser grade cinemas. The film is filled with the by now usual living dead cliches, but with one slightly new variation; the re-animated corpses are the direct result of deliberate scientific planning and not by chance accident.

The confusing plot (or what there is of it) concerns a man's search for a missing priest who may or may not be dead, and who may or may not have found the secret of reviving the dead. Apparently, some sort of massive conspiracy exists in an effort to revitalize one wealthy Italian Howard Hughes type who has stipulated in his will of sorts that he be brought back.

The organization, which appears almost government sponsored, will stop at nothing to achieve their ends, including eliminating the cutes. They set up a giant corporation of TV cameras and computers into some sort of abandoned research center, all hush, hush. How all this elaborate machinery is to revive the dead is never explained. In fact, much happens without explanation but screen viewers wait patiently for an ending to tie up innumerable loose ends. They are still waiting.

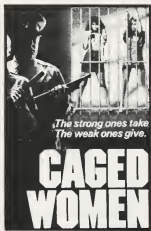
Bob Ruzz

(Those seeing newspaper ads for **REVENGE OF THE DEAD** may have noted the self-imposed 'no one under 18 admitted' notice — usually done in the case of films like **DAWN OF THE DEAD** and **ZOMBIE** to avoid the MPAA's inevitable X rating for excessive violence. But in this film's case, **REVENGE OF THE DEAD** would almost certainly have received an 'R' had it been rated since the level of violence is so low — in fact, **INDIANA JONES** is several times more graphic than this film. Could it be that distributors are now seeking a self-imposed 'N' status to mislead viewers into thinking a film will be MORE violent than it actually is? D.F.)

CAGED WOMEN

Motion Picture Marketing, those nice people who brought you last year's Eurogore epics, **THE GATES OF HELL** and **NIGHT OF THE ZOMBIES**, are back with **CAGED WOMEN**, an Italian-French "girls in prison" movie highlighted by spaghetti lesbianism, flesh-eating rats, and a sadistic prison matron who makes Lisa look like Mother Theresa.

Posing as a prostitute, a beautiful journalist infiltrates a prison complex somewhere in Europe in order to investigate reports of inhumane conditions. She immediately arouses the suspicion of a sadistic lesbian guard, and



is then singled out for punishment and torture by the nympho-fascist warden of the prison. After being forced to fight in a puddle of human excrement, thrown into solitary confinement, nearly devoured by a horde of rats, placed inside a metal bell that is banged on repeatedly by guards until her eardrums explode, and finally, raped; our heroine concludes that conditions at the prison are indeed inhumane and escapes with the prison doctor. The lesbian guard is killed by a lesbian prisoner with a dagger made from a spoon. Finally, the nympho warden is arrested by the authorities along with her fat consort and cohort, the warden of the adjoining men's prison.

A dynamite movie — right? Wrong. **CAGED WOMEN** is a viewing experience that is about as interesting as watching your neighbor's vacation slides. The film is directed by Vincent "where's the plot?" Dawn, and like Dawn's previous effort for MPM, **NIGHT OF THE ZOMBIES**, it is riddled with meaningless subplots that make the film drag on for an eternity. It is further weighed down by excessive talkiness.

Yet, **CAGED WOMEN** is recommended to all who wish to feast their eyes on the sleaziest looking blonde beauty to come out of Europe since Bridget Bardot. This actress (same unknown) portrays the prisoner who stabs the guard, and is also the main lesbian interest in the film. She has the same kind of guttertrash good looks that once endeared exploitation audiences to Regina Carrol. If not for her, I would have demanded my money back.

Roger Berrian

RAZORBACK

The first feature film to be directed by video clip maker Russell Mulcahy, **RAZORBACK** opens on a brutal note as a young boy is taken from his grandfather's house by a rogue 900 pound "razorback." The grandfather, Jake Cullen (Bill Kerr), is then charged with the boy's murder despite his claim of innocence.

The film moves a few years into the future where we meet an animal rights activist, Beth Winters (Judy Morris), visiting Australia to investigate the kangaroo slaughter. Her pursuit of a story leads her to the "Petpak Cannery" where she meets the disgusting Baker brothers, Benny (Chris Haywood) and Dicko (David Argue). Not long after meeting the brothers, she disappears.

Hearing about her disappearance, her husband, Carl (Gregory Harrison), leaves America for the small outback town of Gumilla. He meets Jake, who informs him that the Baker brothers may know what happened to her. Benny and Dicko aren't in a hurry to help him, though, so Carl turns for help to Sarah (Arkie Whiteley), a friend of Jake's.

Together they investigate the theory of the freak "Razorback." Eventually Carl realizes that the pig may have killed his wife, and it's at this point that the classic man vs. beast story begins.

RAZORBACK is visually stunning, which isn't surprising when you look back at the career of director Mulcahy. In the past he's

worked on videos for people like Billy Joel, Kim Carnes, and groups like Ultravox and Duran Duran. And there's also the cinematographs of Dean (**THE ROAD WARRIOR**) Semler.

The special effects team did a good job of creating the giant pig, which is believable in nearly all of its scenes. Close-up shots reveal a face which has an ability to show 30 different expressions. Gore is kept to a minimum, with the emphasis being placed on suspense and humor, but what happens to "Razorback" at the end will no doubt bring cheers from audiences worldwide.

On the whole, **RAZORBACK** is well worth seeing, but don't go expecting to be scared out of your wits. The film has a few good scares but isn't terrifying.

Several reports of **RAZORBACK 2** have been floating around but these have been denied by the Australian Distributor, Greater Union. But if **RAZORBACK** does well in America and Japan, as is expected, the sequel should bring home the bacon.

David Nofle

Video Vomitorium

CROCODILE

(Thorn EMI) Without a doubt, Herman Cohen's Cobra Media is a welcomed entity amongst the exploitation horror folks. One of his first releases tossed out at us back in 1981 was **CROCODILE**. We owe a "thank-you" to home video major Thorn EMI for securing solid distribution rights to this ludicrous entry in the "atomic" mutant on the loose" category. This Chinese made import may never give **JAWS** a run for its money, but by golly... we gotta give it an 'E' for effort!

Atomic testing creates an enormous crocodile that wreaks holy hell with seaside villages. The two main heroes lose their loved ones to the sucker early on in the film and the pair seek revenge. Pic starts out strong with some mildly impressive miniature and optical work of a tropical storm. Unfortunately, only those interested in viewing how foreign craftsmen make this idea work will stick it out to the film's conclusion.

Much of the first two-thirds occupies itself with partial glimpses of the creature slithering its way through water with several close-up shots of it's eye opening before it strikes. Essentially, you never really do see the entire croc unless it's a brief shot of a "live" croc walking about a miniature set. Luckily, the rapid editing pace and sudden scene changes keep this flack moving. With the clever dubbing and "okay, next scene right away" cutting, it holds the attention span that otherwise would have been long gone.

Attack scenes are on par with **TENTACLES**, where the monster is viewed in unidentifiable fragments and lots of extras running and bleeding. Grisliest scene occurs when a boatman is swallowed by the beast. Camera angle is barreled down the monster's throat and the boatman is exposed from the shoulders up, screaming and squirming as the

croc gulps him down. UGH!

Home video transfer suffers due to the cinemascope lensing. The action is lost on the left and right extremes of the image and no attempt was made to scan back and forth.

Final is, sad to say, not worth the wait. An abysmal life-size model working with the live action is so poorly handled that... hold on!... maybe it 'is' worth the wait! You must see it to believe it!!

Regardless of the several shortcomings of **CROCODILE**, it's still recommended viewing as there are some redeeming values to be found. Just keep your mind open... and your eyes, if possible!

Tim Ferrante

JACK THE RIPPER

(Vestron Video) After four films together, the director most closely associated with Klaus Kinski would have to be Werner Herzog, but trailing a distant second would be exploitation king Jess ("Jesus") Franco, who's guided Kinski through **COUNT DRACULA**, **JUSTINE**, and this retelling of the Jack the Ripper legend. And since this is a Franco film, Jack's activities have never been more outrageous as he makes a practice of carving the breasts from his streetwalker victims and actually raping a girl during her death throes after having stabbed her a couple or so times.

But despite all this and the o.k. production values, Franco's dreary pacing has never been more evident and most of **JACK THE RIPPER** is simply boring. It doesn't help that the climax consists of Kinski surrendering to police and being handcuffed in a scene with about as much life in it as Chris George has these days. The violent highlights of **JACK THE RIPPER** would make a great 10 minute featurette, but as a full-length film it's rough going.

THE LAST HORROR FILM

(Media) For a souvenir documentary of the 1981 Cannes Film Festival, you could hardly improve on **THE LAST HORROR FILM**, which spends a good deal of screen time providing colorful views of the huge promotional displays erected for films like **POSSESSION**, **FOR YOUR EYES ONLY** and **STAB** (later changed to **STILL OF THE NIGHT**), giving us a view of Cannes' topless beaches, and peering in on European celebrities like Marcello Mastroianni and Isabelle Adjani (who probably had no idea they'd wind up making cameo appearances in a grade Z slash film).

Unfortunately, **THE LAST HORROR FILM** isn't intended as just a French travelogue—it's supposed to be a horror comedy set at this celebrated film festival. Yet TLHF isn't particularly horrifying, and the comedy reaches several feet below the bottom of the barrel.

The stars are Joe Spinell and Caroline Munro in their third film together after **STAR CRASH** and **MANIAC**. If I didn't know better, I'd think **MANIAC** director William Lustig hired David Winters to make this so his movie would look good by comparison. At least **MANIAC** was a straightforward horror film with some honest shocks and a genuinely disturbing atmosphere. The most disturbing thing about TLHF are all those close-ups of Spinell's sweaty, puffy face. Joe's proved he can be a good actor in things like the **GOODFATHER** films, but TLHF is just an excuse for him to eat scenery on a scale that makes George C. Scott's performance in **FIRESTARTER** seem restrained.

If TLHF could have taken a tip from **MANIAC** and played things straight down the line, the result could have been a decent little shocker with plenty of good scenery as a bonus. TLHF isn't content to do that, though—it insists on tossing in ridiculous fantasy scenes, lame humor, and incredible plot twists that blow what little credibility the film could have had all to hell.

The worst example is the climax which—as with **Darth Vader** in **JEDI** and **Jaws** in **MOONRAKER**—makes an eleventh hour attempt to turn mass murderer Spinell into a hero. This plot worked okay in those other films, but—believe me—not here.

For all the awkward attempts at humor scattered throughout, there was only one scene that especially amused me. During a jury screening of Munro's new film **SCREAM**, we watch her (in this film-within-a-film) go into hysterics as a madman shoves a torch into her face over and over till she's like a melted candy apple from the neck up. But in the audience, the jury panelists remark how "brilliant" her performance is and then proceed to mark Caroline as "Best Actress" on their ballots over nominees like Jane Fonda, Faye Dunaway, and Meryl Streep!

Considering how the story is basically about a star-struck fan (Spinell) who hounds his idol, TLHF seems to take special delight in stressing its parallels with the John Hinckley/Jodie Foster case, which was fresh

news when this was shot back in 1981. In one scene, we hear a radio announcer report the attempted assassination of President Reagan and remark that Hinckley did it to impress Foster, who he had seen in the film **TAXI DRIVER**. Sharp-minded viewers will recall that Spinell actually had a small scene with Robert De Niro in **TAXI DRIVER** as the cab company boss who hires him. To further complicate matters, Spinell's character in TLHF even works as a cabbie!

Although it had a theatrical showing in Las Vegas, TLHF has reportedly played no other engagements in the U.S. An amusing footnote concerns Munro's husband/manager, Judd Hamilton, who helped produce this mess and apparently authorized for Caroline's voice to be dubbed by another actress in the final prints. Munro divorced him after the film's completion, so at least Hamilton won't be around to botch her career with disastrous films anymore.

D.F.

TO ALL A GOODNIGHT

(Media) Directed by David Hess. Produced by Jay Rasumny. Written by Alex Rebar. Make-up effects by Mark Shostrom.

If you blink during the beginning of this slasher flick, you might miss the opening prologue, which is rushed on and off so quickly it's obvious that the makers just included it to follow the formula of the slasher movies of the last five years without adding anything new.

It's Christmastime at an exclusive Southern California girl's school, and most of the girls are going home to their families. The seven or eight girls who stay behind decide to drug their housemother and invite some boyfriends over for a party. What they don't now is that, two years ago, a girl died at the school during a sorority prank (yawn), and now someone is stalking the kids wearing a Santa Claus suit. The identity of the killer is glaringly obvious from square one, despite the usual feeble red herrings (like the retarded groundskeeper). By the time the nice girl and boy defeat the killer, the viewer has either been bored out of his mind or disgusted by the more woman-exploitative elements of this 84 minute cliché.

The only elements of note in this film are some of the names behind the camera. **TO ALL A GOODNIGHT** was directed and written by two of the better-known exploitation actors, David (LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT) Hess and Alex (THE INCREDIBLE MELTING MAN) Rebar respectively. However, they display far less talent than that of the people whose efforts are more immediately visible: the cast, who do what they can with the hackneyed material, and effectsman Mark Shostrom, who provides some decent work on the many victims. The deaths include murder by knife, axe, and airplane propeller in a scene exactly like a similar one in **RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK**. Since this film was made during Christmas 1980, one can't say that the scene was a ripoff, instead, one can list the borrowings from **FRIDAY THE 13th** and **PROM NIGHT**, which were released the same year. And will someone explain the logic of setting a Christmas movie in an area

that doesn't receive any snow?

Michael Gingold

DEMENTED

A scatterbrained revenge-horror opus in the **I SPIT ON YOUR GRAVE** mold, released directly to video. It was co-written and produced by **INCREDIBLE MELTING MAN** Alex Rebar.

A young, breasty bride is gang-banged in a horse stable, and for the trauma she ends up in a nuthouse. Months (years?) later she's recuperating at home from all the shock therapy sessions when a group of shiftless neighborhood teens break in, rape her, torment her, and the poor woman deteriorates into a blithering, murderous fiend (in a nightgown!). Her vendetta against the boys is accomplished with cleaver, shotgun, and (in one scene that must be seen to be believed) a taut wire around the scrotum. Her oversexed doctor husband greets her at the finale, only to be performed by the business-end of a dagger.

The art director should win some kind of bad taste award for the set design—a floral pattern on a sofa with striped cushions? C'mon. After the 87 interminable minutes of **DEMENTED** slowed to a dull end, someone in the room announced: "The incredible melting movie."

Jeffrey Frenzen

OLIVIA

(VC II) The more I talk about other horror video lovers, the more I reach the conclusion that I'm the only person in America who thinks of **Ulli Lommel** as a talented director. Granted, I've never seen his name at the beginning of a "great film," but I think that's more the result of Lommel's apparent fondness for mediocre storylines than a lack of directorial ingenuity. In short, no matter how empty his screenplays have been, I've always found Lommel's work, at the very least, visually exciting. (He even does a lot of his own cinematography).

And so we come to **OLIVIA**, a 1981 release co-written and directed by Lommel and starring his "house player," Susanna Love. The story is a mishmash of ideas from past Lommel films, especially **THE BOOGYMAN**, and Lommel's tendency towards unnecessary subplots is apparent. Love portrays a young woman who, after witnessing the murder of her mother (a prostitute) while a child, grows up with a touch of schizophrenia—her mother's voice occasionally commands her. Love also suffers from an unhappy marriage and turns to prostitution for affection. While turning her first trick (in the second of the film's two bondage sequences), some complications arise and things look bleak until Susanna falls in love with an engineer from America. Of course, Love's dominating husband is less than thrilled with her affair and therein lies a triangle. Without revealing much more of the plot, I'll add that there is another murder (a dumb one at that, later replicated in **BOOGYMAN II**) and some very interesting cat-and-mouse flirting.

At its core, the story is a strong character study with some nicely tense moments. But, as with all else he's done, Lommel throws in

some pointless subplots which serve only to confuse the events and make them seem less plausible. In fact, one question plagued me the whole time I watched OLIVIA — why does she hear voices at all? Her problem is never directly tied to anything that happens on the screen and nothing that she does can't be explained in more basic, human terms. If only Lommel had left well enough alone, he would have had an extremely effective psychological horror drama. As it stands, OLIVIA is only moderately effective.

Let me state emphatically, however, that no matter how I feel about the plotting, Suzanna Love is terrific as Olivia. Her character goes through a series of changes and Love makes each and every one believable. She shows far more acting talent than I thought she possessed and, as a bonus, more more of a surprisingly great-looking body than I expected.

In conclusion, I say "Yes," I enjoyed Olivia, because of its characters, cinematography and leading lady, but I think that Lommel's tendency to throw in everything and the kitchen sink lessens the film's impact. OLIVIA is not great, but it is definitely worth a viewing. Even more so OLIVIA is exactly what I've come to expect from Ulli Lommel.

Jeff Kline

THE DEVONSHIRE TERROR

Aside from a short-lived stint in New York, THE DEVONSHIRE TERROR has — as far as I can tell — never made it to screens round the rest of the country. That's really too bad since TDT is probably director Ulli Lommel's best yet (with the possible exception of TENDERNESS OF THE WOLVES, which I haven't seen) — featuring gorgeous cinematography by Lommel, the sight of Donald Pleasance being internally consumed by worms, and another starring role for Lommel's wife, Suzanna Love, who's been in all his movies going back to COCAINE COWBOYS in Lommel's pre-BOOGIE MAN days.

Lommel is known as a former collaborator of the late German director Rainer Werner Fassbinder, and TDT shows the same conspicuous use of rich color schemes which marked many of Fassbinder's efforts like

LOLA and DESPAIR. Of course, the similarity pretty much ends there, but TDT still works as a modest but successful spin off of the basic BLACK SUNDAY HAUNTED PALACE storyline, with a murdered witch coming back from the grave for revenge.

The twist here is that we're never certain till the end whether Love is actually the latter-day witch that the law people suspect her of being. And when everyone's suspicions are finally confirmed, we get a special-effects laden finish with an exploding head and a melting face on view.

I'd really have like seeing TDT in a theatre considering its high production values and visual flash, but — as with so many other hard-to-find titles — a videotape beats nothing.

D.F.

I DISMEMBER MAMA

(Best Film and Video) I DISMEMBER

MAMA is one of those films that never lives up to its reputation, but isn't bad on its own.

MAMA tells the heartwarming story of a young man named Albert (Zoej Hall) who believes that all women are impure and deserve to die, especially his own mother. Then Albert meets Ann (Gen Reisch), age nine, and falls in love. As our two romantic adventurers try to escape the cold realities of the unaccepting world around them, Albert begins to lose control and Ann's disillusionment with her handsome suit suggests there's trouble in paradise. Will their passion survive? Will Albert kill again (as he's done before)? Will Greg Mullavey (OF MARY HARTMAN fame), as the detective, ever wipe that silly smirk off his face?

These questions and many others are answered with competence by director Paul Leder, who shows some real talent, especially during an excellent flashback sequence. Unfortunately, though, Leder's film has little blood and, although a perverse sexual atmosphere pervades, there isn't enough excitement on screen to warrant repeated viewings. A

painful to watch humiliation sequence near the beginning only serves to reinforce the fact that MAMA is an interesting, if unexceptional, little movie that should be seen and enjoyed — once.

Jeff Kline

BEHIND LOCKED DOORS

(Best Film and Video) BEHIND LOCKED DOORS is a prime example of a film which throws in everything and comes up with nothing. You'd think that any motion picture whose highlights includes bits of — exhibitionism, lesbianism, voyeurism, necrophilia, bondage, rape, rock music, dancing, etc., etc. — would be, at the very least, interesting. But when you add to this mixture an absolutely deadening plot that moves at a snail's pace, terrible acting, a ten minute opening with no dialogue (just hip teens grooving), and characters about as interesting as athlete's feet, all you get is a cure for insomnia. BEHIND doesn't even fit into the "It's so bad, it's good" category. It's just too plain boring. Not worth a rental, and not worth your time.

Jeff Kline

Speaking of Splatter

Hi, Don,

I enjoy the work you're doing. I especially enjoyed the Balthus-Broose and Mary Woronof interviews you've done in S.T. the article you did for Doniguard on Sado was very interesting although the film itself sounds much too depressing and upsetting to be one I'd want to see.

The new look on S.T. is great, but the most important thing about S.T. to me is the info it contains. No matter what format you use, I will be looking forward to each new issue.

Steven ran new

Better J. Cohen
Brooklyn, New York

Dear Don,

I recently picked up copies of 1-4, and wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed them. I especially enjoy your emphasis on regional films that play throughout the South. Like yourself, I'm a native of Tennessee, and only recently moved to Illinois. I grew up going to the local drive-in in Paris, seeing many of the films you have discussed in your magazine. (Happy to say the Sky-Vue in Paris is still thriving, and sometimes looks really interesting, obscure features to this day. Within the last couple of years I have seen IRON'S SOMETHING WEIRD, WOMEN AND BLOODY TERROR and Larry Buchanan's THE LACHNESH HORROR among others at the Sky-Vue).

Although I sometimes went to the walk-in in Paris (which showed horror double features on many weekends), the movies I really remember were the cheap-O Southern and imported dubbed movies the Sky-Vue showed during the late 60's and early 70's. If G. Lewis movies came through often. I've seen BLOOD FEAST, COLORED BLOOD RED, GUESS SOME TWOSOME, and SOMETHING WEIRD all more than once. They used to show great graduate feature horror shows, which is when my love for low-budget horror movies started.

Later when I moved to Knoxville, I supported myself while going to the University of Tennessee by working for over a year at the Twin Aire Drive In in

TN and TN which also showed those movies, and I reinforced my interest in these films. While working there we broke the house record with the ORGY OF THE LIVING DEAD triple-feature (REVENGE, CURSE, and FANGS OF...). Also had big success with LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT, which was held over for a month with various co-features. I think it was LAST HOUSE which first made the impression on me (at age 18) that these low-budget movies could be something other than just entertainment; that they could be imaginative, thought-provoking or make a political or philosophical statement in their own crude way. LAST HOUSE is one of my favorite "gore" movies which I think has often been misunderstood. Unlike the sanitized "RH" movies, where death is shown off-screen or in a "tasteful" way, LAST HOUSE presents violence as it is in real life, searing, brutal and horrible. The final shot of the parents after the slaughter makes clear that although they have had their revenge, they have gained nothing through their own use of violence.

Anyway, my enjoyment of these "splatter" films continues, and I am happy that you are putting out a magazine that focuses on them. The first few issues have been extremely well-written and very informative. I hope you continue to prosper and continue to improve (I liked the new format in 3). You really fulfill a need by covering films and personalities that are often ignored or downgraded by other publications. I look forward to the next issue, and hope you continue for many more.

Sincerely,
Bob Brown
Cairo, IL

Dear Donald,

Splatter Times 4 is terrific. You're continuing to uncover a lot of great obscure film information, like the SNUFF article. I really enjoyed reading that. I was also interested in the review of FALL BEAR, or at least what I could read without giving away the plot.

It's a shame that you had to change your format. I thought the newspaper-tablet format gave S.T. a very distinctive look. The reviews this issue were very enjoyable, especially those on the Italian Imports.

That's all for now. Keep up the good work.

Yours truly,
Michael Gingold

(Actually, I only printed the first three issues in that tablet format out of economic considerations - because I was a good \$100 cheaper than the magazine format approach used in No. 1. I personally disliked doing *The Splatter Times* as a tablet because the ultra cheap paper printed on turns yellow in about a year and makes it difficult for those who wish to save their copies (and I hope that's everyone!). Luckily, I was able to finally locate a printer who could do our last issue as a magazine and on better quality paper, but 'without' charging me a substantially higher price. D.F.)

Dear Don,

When I came home from work last night, I was most pleasantly surprised to find your *Splatter Times* 4 awaiting me... which I have begun to devour with delight... **JUST WISH ALL THOSE GREAT 'SICK' FILMS YOU TALK ABOUT AND REVIEW WOULD FIND THEIR WAY TO PITTSBURGH!!!** PIECES did play here most briefly and naturally vanished from the face of the earth... The other titles could be made-better as far as I can tell from the dirk of films here in Pittsburgh. **YOU KNOW YOU ARE REALLY SICK. OON. TO PUT OUT SUCH A DISTINGUISHED PUBLICATION... COURSE I AM TOO AND THAT IS WHY I ENJOY YOUR SPATTER TIMES SO VERY VERY MUCH**... with I bring no exception.

Like your layout change in 1, Don - not that it really mattered to me, as content is what matters... though your point about "Bugsy" is well taken. Like it's not cool, man, yeah now... looks much more polished (this way, I think, though content will still only appeal to "suckers" - LIKE US!!)

Take care, Don, and keep up the fine work...

Sincerely yours with best wishes for continued success,

John A. Schindler, Jr.
Pittsburgh, PA

Dear Donald,

Thanks for sending me issue 4 of *Splatter Times*. A great looking publication! I have had the opportunity to speak with Gary Sverda and Bill George (a heckuva nice guy) and am excited that gore-maniacs and low-brow enthusiasts exist with such a vengeance outside of NYC. Publications here, such as the *Gore Gazette*, which I am no longer associated with but still enjoy, and *Morbid Express* (reprehensible tag: horror ravings from a reprehensible human named Landis) obviously don't compare to the professionalism of *Splatter*. While reading it, I am often reminded of Calvin Beck's *Castle of Frankenstein*, a great publication which offered the only alternative to the gore-geezers of *Famous Monsters*. Again, *Splatter* is good stuff.

Now for some ramblings of my own. Fred Ray is obviously a friend of yours, and he gives an enjoyable interview, but I must say, he is a filmmaker of questionable talent. He can make all the excuses he wants, but SC-MPS is an implausible piece of shit. It is my theory that when not even the lowest form of life on *Red St.* can tolerate a film, it should be excised. It's only positive point was of Farley Arkenman and his damn book, a curio-inducing cameo if there ever was.

SPATTER U is my abysmal... To my dismay, *TENERE* was picked up for distribution by Bedford Releasing (*DEAD PEOPLE*, *NEW YORK NIGHTS*, *SHOCKING ASIA*). They intend to call it,

get ready for this... **UNRANE! THE BEING** was pulled to release three days before opening on *Red St.* by Terry Levine. Another Levine release, *7 DOORS*, got me to sleep, and I walked out on *BLACK CAT*. Epics of brilliance that I would recommend include *SEX AND VIOLENCE*, re-release of *LEGEND OF THE BAYOU*, Joe D'Amato's *BURIED ALIVE* (again, a Levine-Aquarian film. I don't know the original title, but the cryon-drawn copy sells like "Puls of Entrails!!!") and *MARDI GRAS MASSACRE*, (the closest thing to H.G. Lewis I've ever seen) and most certainly, *REVENGE OF THE ZOMBIES*.

Anything you need from New Line, don't hesitate to write or call. If you're ever in New York call me and we'll get together. And keep sending *Splatter Times*, an unsavory yet classy publication...

Gary Hertz
New Line Cinema
New York, N.Y.

(After receiving this letter, I visited Gary at New Line while in New York in July and can't thank him enough for the armload of great stills, posters, and press books he gave me! D.F.)

Dear Don,

I just received *Splatter Times* No. 4 and "loved it!" I enclosed my check for \$14.00 for two subscriptions - one for the office and one for home. It's a great magazine - kind of like *Fangoria* before it went too easy and legitimate. I also enjoy your new format. I subscribe to just about every sex and violence gore magazine and newsletter in the United States and yours is probably the best. Keep up the good work.

Sincerely,
William G. Zimmerman
Lawwood, Kansas

Donald,

Enclosed is \$2 to renew my subscription to your fabulous *Immune Splatter Times*. I like your new format much better than the old tablet size.

I rent a lot of videos over the weekends, usually three to four movies. I like the obscure stuff that usually doesn't play around here. Your reviews of these obscure films really come in handy when browsing through the video shelves. I wish I could find a copy of Pasolini's *SALO* or *B.S.A. SHE WOLF OF THE SS*.

I subscribe to a few other fanzines such as *Gore Gazette*, *Trashola*, *Chicago Shivers*, and *Confessions of a Trash Fiend*. What I like about *Gore Gazette* is that from time to time Rick offers some really obscure one-sheets for sale. If you come across any I'm sure your readers would be interested in purchasing them from you.

Your writing reminds me of the short-lived fanzine *Fear of Darkness*, which I thought had some great articles. Who knows, maybe they will come back. (I hope so, they still have my subscription money!)

Down here in Texas, Pasadena is a suburb of Houston so you can get an idea of where I am; the drive has to open your mind. They usually show the first run crap, but at the triple screen drive-ins they usually will reserve one screen for horror or an Italian zombie import. Recently I have seen *Fate's HOUSE BY THE CEMETERY*, *CONQUEST*, *INVASION OF THE FLESH HUNTERS*, *MANSSION OF THE DOOMED*, *EVIL DEAD*, and *NIGHT OF THE ZOMBIES*. Right now, though, it is so hot at night and you have to burn about three rings of Pix toward the Mosquitoes. I think I like the spring and winter months better for drive-in viewing.

In my line of work, I sell dental equipment and supplies. I am sometimes drunk into a movie around noon and he back out in the territory around two. So haes aren't really a problem for me on the new

summer blockbusters.

Well, I've gone on too long - just keep up the great work and I hope you had a long time!

Thanks
Mark Harris
Pasadena, Texas

Dear Don,

I know it's getting passe to tell you *Splatter Times* is heading *Fangoria* at its own game, but I'm sure you won't turn down a compliment like that.

The highlight of 4 is definitely your interview with Fred Olen Ray. When the two of you get to talking exploitation... look out! The guy seems so knowledgeable on the low budget horror genre you might consider giving Ray his own column, although with so many releases in his credit I doubt he'd have the time.

The Lynn Lowry interview surprised me. Call me naive or all me a shithead but I had never recognized the girl from *THEY CAME FROM WITHIN* as also appearing in *CAT PEOPLE*, *THE CRAZIES*, and *I DRINK YOUR BLOOD*... what a small world after all.

I also liked the movie review section. Hard to believe that of the 17 movies reviewed only four (*PICTUS*, *SLEEPAWAY CAMP*, *THE BLACK CAT*, and *MAKE THEM DIE SLOWLY*) have played Chicago. How the hell do I keep (Chicago) Shivers going when so few of the really good genre efforts are never shown? I'd really like to see *THE POWER* to find out if its as bad as everyone says and *F&H* to see the latest *ARGENT (TENERE)*. *Fuked* (7 DOORS OF DEATH), and *Lenzi* (*CITY OF THE WALKING DEAD*) eps... .

The rest of the issue: *Women*, *Sodium* and *SNUFF* was not exactly "up my alley." I've never appreciated *Women's* talents and the other two articles simply did not run in my taste range.

Keep up the great work,
Regards,
Ron Carlson

Dear Don,

A round of applause for the *Splatter Times* 4. As far as I'm concerned, this is the event of 1984, although the columns "Speaking of Splatter" and "Video Vandalism" will be greatly missed; the change in format is excellent. (Both columns are back this issue, D.F.)

Every article is flawless except for the for the interview with Mary Woronof, that was uninteresting. But the Fred Olen Ray and Lynn Lowry were the best I've read in any horror magazine published.

Hopefully you'll do an interview with Jeff Lieberman. I didn't think too much of his *JUST BEFORE DAWN* but *SQUIRM* and *BLUE SUNSHINE* were great and well worth hearing about. (We'd love to interview Lieberman but don't know how to contact him. D.F.)

And something that surprised me, there was actually some thing good to see at the drive-in where in Virginia. It was a triple-bill with *THE BLOODEATERS*, *NIGHT OF THE DEMON*, and *FRIGHTMARE*. The last two I caught on video so I did not go. But maybe you can tell me something about *BLOOD EATERS* if you have seen it. (For detailed info on *BLOOD EATERS*, refer to Tim Ferrante's excellent article on its star, John Amicus, which was run a few issues back in *Fangoria*. D.F.)

Keep up the good work, so great work.

Sincerely,
Bill Naylor
Falmouth, VA



Spatter Times reader George Stover poses on the set of John Waters' **POLYESTER** with everyone's favorite egg lover, Edith Massey.

(Because our letters page was deleted last issue due to a printing problem, I'm running the following letters here which were received in response to issue 3, O.F.)

Dear Donald,

I just wanted to write to let you know that I really enjoyed the latest issue of *The Spatter Times*. Of particular interest was the article describing the lawsuit against Charles Band. A couple of my scenes from Don Ombler's *FIEND* appear in the *FILMGORE* tape, even though *FIEND* could not possibly be considered a gore film by any stretch of the imagination. Nevertheless, it is thrilling to be included.

I also enjoyed the interviews with Richard Johnson and Fred Olen Ray. And speaking of interviews, congratulations on the excellent interview with H.G. Lewis in issue no. 2.

Keep up the good work with *The Spatter Times* and best of luck with future issues.

Sincerely,

George Stover

Baltimore, Maryland

(George Stover is an actor who has appeared in John Waters' *FEMALE TROUBLE*, *DESPERATELY LIVING*, and *POLYESTER*, as well as in Don Ombler's *THE ALIEN FACTOR*, *FEND*, and *NIGHTREMY*. George is also the publisher of *Carnal Desire* magazine. D.F.)

Dear Donald,

Sensational! — *The Spatter Times*! Thanks for doing such a fantastic review and picture collection.

Love,

Bobbie (Browne)

Hollywood, CA

Dear Mr. Farmer,

Issue no. 3 was really great! The interview with Fred Olen Ray was very interesting, and the grisly photos of the girl being scalped from *SCALPS* were terrific. Also, the article on beautiful Robbie Browne was good. I saw *MAUSOLEUM* just the other day on video, and I thought that it was excellent! I watched it twice! The pictures of her in no. 2 were also remarkable, although for another reason!

But I do have one little complaint. Who is this Roger Beerman guy? Recently I managed to catch *NIGHT OF THE ZOMBIES* at my local drive-in, and personally, I thought it was great. Maybe the make-up effects weren't exactly the best, but any gorehead would have to like it. It contains enough gore to satisfy any blood-maven, and it's got a lot of fast-paced mayhem. Mr. Beerman did give the classic *GATES OF HELL* a fairly decent review in no. 2, though.

The interview with Richard Johnson was alright. I've seen him in the excellent *ZOMBIE, BEYOND THE DOOR*, and the dumb *SCREAMERS*. In that article you show a movie ad for that film that states "you will actually see a man buried inside out." Forget it. In the version I saw I never once witnessed that occur on the screen, all I saw was maybe 30 minutes of stupid looking gore and the rest a boring, tedious, and childish fantasy about ridiculous looking monsters rescuing treasure from the lost city of Atlantis. And it at all costs!

Keep up the good work, Mr. Farmer. I'm eagerly awaiting no. 4.

Sincerely,

King Gorehead, Vincent Santamaria

Blair Springs, MO

Dear Donald,

Many thanks for the third issue of *The Spatter Times* — the best one yet. Loved the coverage on the Blind Dead films since no one has ever been written about them. Great reviews about obscure films — keep them up, and I like the casual matter-of-fact interviews. The only area in which you need improvement is in the proofreading — great types!

Clematis is later than ever, but I'm busy at work on the sixth issue of present.

Best

John E. Farnum

Philadelphia, Penn.

Dear Don,

Thanks for rushing me 8 copies of *The Spatter Times* No. 4. What else can I say — it was great! Each issue just keeps getting better and better.

I especially enjoyed your reports on *SPATTER* and the return of Andy Milligan. It was also the first time that I've ever seen the titles of H.G. Lewis' advertising and P.R. books listed. *THE AMAZING BERSERKER*, *GORDON LEWIS* book ignored them completely!

My only complaint with *The Spatter Times* is that it doesn't come out often enough. Three months is too long to wait between issues.

Sincerely,

Mike Horvath

Dear Don,

I have been a horror aficionado all my life, and your publication knows me one! I have yet to find a person who shared my adrenal love for the genre. For instance, when my friends and I discuss going to a movie, their favorites are strictly Hollywood thriller or avant-garde cinema. Yours truly pushes for the odd

assortment of low-budget gore frenzies playing only that week, but no Rodney Dangerfield so aptly declares, "I can't get no respect."

Your magazine is the friend I've been waiting for. I loved *The Spatter Times* instantly because it is honest, intelligent (etc., etc.) and your love of the subject matter is so evident, it melts my heart (sic).

Keep up the good work and continue to spread the word.

Sincerely,

Steve Portman

Donald,

Let me say how much I enjoyed the latest issue of *The Spatter Times*. Each issue you have done has gotten better and better. There are so very few film fan publications around today, and *The Spatter Times* helps fill the void with a well researched, entertaining, and informative newspaper. It is indeed impressive. Don.

TH later,

Oreck Jasson

Prairie Village, KS

Donald,

No. 3 is the best of the lot. Your improvement curve is going to have to bottom out one of these days.

Except for MS 45, all of the rest of the films in your *Videos* Vamplifiers are unknown quantities to me. Hopefully, Teleview will put more Spanish horror films on the market. I've lived in South Texas for five years, and Kinosky and Nascy were staples of the Mexican drive-in circuit. Every now and then *On television* on the Satellite show a Nascy film. A lot of Joe France's more sexually oriented films appear on SelectTV's Night Owl Theatre. I'm most looking forward to seeing *BOOGYMAN II*. This one sounds like a film you either love or hate. I liked Lomax's first *BOOGYMAN* film, also enjoyed *THE DEVONSHIRE TERROR*, however *BRAINWAVES* was a boring stinker. MS 45 had tremendous energy. And Ferrara also has one to be released called *FEAR CITY* which gives him some action and a bigger budget.

SPATTER (new titled *FUTURE-KILL*, D.F.) looks like a winner if advance peaks are true. Marilyn Buns looks, uh, impressive as Dr. Frank. Fred Olen Ray has always struck me as a talented person who is limited by budgetary constraints, not imagination. Sounds like his latest *SCALPS* may get a wide enough release so even we may see it down here in Texas. I share his admiration for the made in FORBIDDEN WORLD. I'd kill to get that film made L.F. Anyway, I wish him luck with *BOHAZARD* — it sounds like his best yet.

Sandy Howard has yet to produce a film I really liked. *ANGEL* has just opened here and it's gotten pretty bad reviews — too tame for his own good.

Richard Johnson can save the worst films imaginable — he's always good. I saw him on an old Alfred Hitchcock show the other night and he was his usual great self.

Finally, I enjoyed the article on the Blind Dead series. I never seen any of them but with video there's always hope.

The best,

Craig Ledbetter

Richardson, TX

(HORROR OF THE ZOMBIES, third entry in the Blind Dead series, is now available on tape from Super Video. Their other Spanish horror releases include *NIGHT OF THE HOWLING BEAST* and *HOUSE OF PSYCHOTIC WOMEN*, both starring Paul Naschy. O.F.)

By sword
By pick
By axe
Bye bye



